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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the European Community Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS), an experimental pilot project designed to evaluate possibilities of credit transfer within the European Community as a means of academic recognition. The ECTS program furthers student mobility within the Community by encouraging students to undertake a substantial period of study in another Community Member State. The study, conducted in the program's first year, involved a 70-question questionnaire administered to 510 students of whom 66.5 percent responded. The students were surveyed in the months after they completed their study abroad experience. Results indicated the following: that 25 percent had serous problems regarding the award of credits and credit transfer; that the formal mechanisms of the ECTS pilot were not well established in the first year; that students were admitted to 98 percent of courses they had chosen originally; that the average number of credits transferred was 95 percent of those awarded during the study period abroad; that knowledge of the host country's culture and society increased substantially during the study abroad period; that the personal value of the experience was viewed positively by most students; and that student experience varied in relation to field of study. Extensive tables present the study data throughout. (JB)

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ERASMUS Monographs No. 15

Friedhelm Maiworm
Wolfgang Steube and
Ulrich Teichler

ECTS IN ITS YEAR OF INAUGURATION:

The View of the Students

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Wissenschaftliches Zentrum
für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung
der Gesamthochschule Kassel

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The study was commissioned by the Task Force: Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth of the Commission of the European Communities.

The present report has been prepared in the context of the monitoring and evaluation of the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS). It is designed primarily for use within the services of the Commission of the European Communities, and although the report is beeing placed at the disposal of the general public, it is emphasized that the views wich it contains are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the offical position of the Commission.

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Preface

The European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) was established by the Council Decision of 15 June 1987. The first phase of the Programme covered the academic years 1987/88 - 1989/90, the second phase being based on the amended Council Decision of 14 December 1989. The Programme is open to all types of higher education institutions and all subject areas.

The central element of the ERASMUS Programme is the furthering of student mobility within the European Community. The student mobility programmes established under the Programme offer university students a chance to undertake a substantial period of study (minimum 3 months) in another Community Member State fully recognized by the home institution as an integral part of their degree. The Inter-University Cooperation Programmes (ICPs) set up under ERASMUS can incorporate (in addition to the student mobility programmes mentioned above) other activities such as teaching staff mobility, development of new joint curricula, and intensive programmes. Collectively, the ICPs constitute the European University Network established under ERASMUS.

In 1989, the European Community Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was introduced as an experimental pilot project designed to test the European potential of credit transfer as an effective means of academic recognition.

Furthermore, ERASMUS offers the possibility to all university staff members of undertaking preparatory visits, study visits or teaching visits to other universities within the Community, and provides support for a wide range of complementary activities seeking to improve the climate for academic exchange and cooperation within the Community.

Since the inception of ERASMUS, great importance has been attached to ensure a thorough evaluation of the Programme's progress. The Task Force Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth of the Commission of the European Communities has therefore commissioned or supported the preparation of a number of studies on various aspects of the Programme's development.

These studies, though designed primarily for use within the services of the Commission of the European Communities, are now being published in the ERASMUS Monograph series, in order to make them accessible to a wider public. The studies are all based on the fairly limited material available in the first years of the Programme, and they are of varying length and quality, but each in its own way contributes to the overall evaluation process of the Programme in more than just a historical sense. The evaluations of academic recognition matters, of the development of specific subject areas, of the role of language training, of accommodation matters etc. are all of relevance to anyone working with and having an interest in ERASMUS. The full list of studies appears elsewhere in the present volume.

1

Objectives and Methods of the Survey

1.1 Context and Rationale of the ECTS Scheme

This paper sets out the findings of a study of "The experiences of ECTS students in 1989/90". This first chapter sets ECTS within the context of the development of student mobility programmes in the European Community and explains the research, design and methodology of the survey.
Student mobility is high on the agenda of higher education policies in most industrial societies. In the process of European integration, student mobility is expected to contribute to improved mutual understanding as well as to the training of a new generation of highly qualified persons for whom expertise and activity in more than one country has become a matter of course.

Since student mobility is expected to grow beyond a small group of students highly motivated and able to pursue their goals even under unfavourable conditions, it has become necessary to set up systems which systematically reduce barriers to student mobility. The additional costs involved in studying abroad might be redressed by the provision of scholarships. Language barriers might be overcome by provisions and incentives for language training and by courses taught in widely known languages. Administrative barriers might be reduced, curricula might be coordinated and formal procedures might be introduced as regards recognition - all aimed to ease student mobility.

Barriers are manifold and are not overcome easily by the various measures taken. Besides, it might not be desirable to revamp higher education in all respects in a way which makes mobility very easy. For example, there are variations between higher education systems in terms of theories, content of knowledge, teaching and learning styles or examinations modes which are generally assumed to be valid. Therefore policies in favour of easing mobility

have to be moderate in their short-term aims and have to set priorities from the outset. When the European Communities inaugurated an Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) in 1987, an ambitious long-term objective was set out according to which 10 percent of the students at higher education institutions in Europe should spend a period of study in another EC Member State; moderate aims and priorities were set as well aimed at making an initial break-through in the face of the manifold barriers against mobility:

- the ERASMUS programme predominantly promotes short-term mobility. As a rule, students are expected to spend a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 1 year abroad and to return afterwards to their home institution. This, of course, keeps costs lower and reduces the academic risks for students involved, compared with those involved in long-term study abroad or frequent moves across boundaries.
- mobility is promoted between a small number of departments each willing to co-operate regularly and continuously in student exchange. In contrast to individual mobility of students to any department of his or her choice, mobility between regularly co-operating departments might be expected to ensure improved conditions in many respects. Mutual knowledge of study conditions and provisions might lead to a certain degree of curricular co-ordination and to the acceptance of the validity of existing curricular differences by the academic staff involved which would help to increase the quality of provision for learning abroad and the likelihood of achievements abroad being recognized. Based on continuous experiences and committed to long-term co-operation, the co-operating departments might establish measures of academic and administrative support for mobile students which could not be expected to be realized by all departments of all institutions of higher education to the same extent.
- the official conditions for being awarded ERASMUS support are limited. Participating departments have to provide evidence only that they have taken measures aimed at ensuring that students' achievements abroad will be recognized upon return. The selection of participating students is not regulated at all by the ERASMUS programme, except for general principles of eligibility. This allows participating departments to get involved in promoting student mobility without being required, from the outset, to undertake substantial changes in their own courses to favour student mobility and this allows the ERASMUS programme to support a wide range of academic and administrative means in favour of increased students mobility in a flexible way.

Adhering in principle to a policy of stimulating diverse solutions does not preclude, however, the search for a more limited range of more ambitious solutions which might serve as models of good practice for others. Within the ERASMUS programme, the search for high-quality solutions takes various forms. For example, award decisions are based on views on desirable academic and administrative arrangements for student mobility, and information on award criteria and decisions plays a role in setting standards. Publications such as guides on how to establish ERASMUS programmes serve to disseminate knowledge on successful practice in the past.

One step further in efforts to explore improved practice was undertaken in 1989. A considerable proportion of the ERASMUS funds was reserved for a pilot scheme in which the potential of a few more demanding conditions for study abroad programmes could be explored. The European Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS) inaugurated in 1989 sets more ambitious conditions for student mobility in two respects:

(a) Certain formal procedures for the calculation of students' achievements and for information on their achievements should be introduced. The underlying assumption is that the level of academic recognition will be higher - other factors apart - if there are common ways of defining units of learning and achievement and if there are common ways of testifying academic achievements. Participating departments are expected to calculate all achievements in terms of 60 credits per year, to provide transcripts on courses taken and credits awarded at any time the individual student is to move to another institution, and to provide information about their course programmes and individual courses in a way that potential participants can prepare thoroughly for their study period abroad.

(b) Recognition of achievements abroad ought to be ensured for a wider range than the standard one in the ERASMUS ICP programme. In the regular mode of ICPs, recognition of achievements acquired during a study period of up to one year abroad is awarded by the "home" department, i.e. the department which as a rule had admitted the student, has shaped his or her knowledge already prior to the study period, and is in the position to assess study on familiar programmes at a small number of partner institutions as one of various components of the complete process of learning it will eventually certify. The ECTS scheme aims to extend the range of recognition in two respects. First, the network of co-operating departments is wider: about 15 departments in each field of study involved co-operate in the pilot scheme from the outset, and a further extension is seen as part of the plan (about 25 departments in each field in 1990/91). Secondly, award of academic recognition (by means of credit transfer) is supposed to be granted for any mode of students' mobility: this includes moves from one participating department to

the other, the aim being the award of a degree by the latter institution or manifold moves, for example a move to a third participating institution upon the completion of the study period supported by an ERASMUS grant.

A number of measures have been taken to ensure a thorough exploration of these ambitious goals. First, preferential treatment has been ensured as far as resources are concerned. Departments participating in the ECTS pilot scheme receive a larger amount of institutional support and face a lower risk of discontinuity of mid-term support than departments participating in Inter-University Cooperation Programmes (ICPs). Secondly, ECTS programmes are awarded more indirect support than ICPs on average by the Commission's efforts in ensuring feedback of experience. Thirdly, the achievements and problems of the students and departments involved in the ECTS scheme are more closely monitored than those involved in ICPs.

1.2 Evaluation of the ERASMUS Programme and the ECTS Student Survey

Systematic gathering of information is an important element in developing and improving student mobility arrangements. The Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth of the Commission of the European Communities, therefore, places strong emphasis on the monitoring and evaluation of the ERASMUS programme in a way which might be helpful for the European, national, and regional authorities, for the institutions of higher education involved and for the participating students making use of the ERASMUS programme, in ensuring its continuity and in stimulating improvements. Monitoring and evaluation might take various forms: meetings of participants and experts, studies on specific aspects, occasional comprehensive assessment of the whole programme, etc. In order to ensure a systematic and continuous way of information gathering, the Task Force entrusted a research team headed by Ulrich Teichler at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work of the Comprehensive University of Kassel with the task of regularly establishing basic statistics, surveying participating students, analyzing reports provided by academic staff, administrative staff, and students involved, and supplementing this evaluation programme by other relevant studies, for example graduate surveys or surveys of mobile teaching staff. In the framework of this programme, the survey "Experiences of ECTS Students 1989/90" was undertaken the findings of which are reported here.

The survey of ECTS students was based on experiences acquired in a survey undertaken in the mid-eighties of students going abroad for a period in the framework of various support programmes, among others the "Joint Study Programmes", i.e. the predecessor pilot programme of the ERASMUS pro-

gramme (see S. Opper, U. Teichler and J. Carlson. The Impact of Study Abroad Programmes on Students and Graduates. London: J. Kingsley, 1990), as well as a survey of ERASMUS students in 1988/89 who were mobile within the framework of Inter-University Cooperation Programmes or as "free movers" (about 5%) (see F. Maiworm, W. Steube and U. Teichler. Learning in Europe: The ERASMUS Experience. London: J. Kingsley, 1991). Experiences of the ECTS students, therefore, are compared in this report with those reported by ERASMUS students of the preceding year.

1.3 Research Design, Methods, and Procedures

This study is based on the questionnaire survey "Experiences of ECTS Students 1989/90", the preparation of which began in summer 1990. Experiences acquired in a previous survey of ERASMUS (ICP and free mover) students 1988/89 and meetings with ECTS students, as well as experts from the Commission of the European Communities, the ERASMUS Bureau, persons involved in the ECTS network, and other experts helped in setting thematic priorities and in formulating the questionnaire. Students were asked to provide information regarding:

- their biography and educational career;
- the pattern of the ERASMUS supported period;
- preparation for the study abroad period;
- advice and support provided by the home and the host institutions of higher education;
- living in the host country;
- studying at the host institution of higher education;
- accommodation;
- financial resources and expenses;
- foreign language proficiency before and after the study period abroad;
- knowledge of and opinion about the host country culture and society;
- procedures related to crediting and credit transfer;
- academic achievements and transfer of credits; and
- summarizing assessment of the life and study period in the host country.

The questionnaire comprised 24 pages, more than 70 questions, and about 750 variables. Most of the questions were closed, though leaving room for statements, for example in a final open category, "others". At the end of the questionnaire, students were asked to describe their worst and best experiences as well as difficulties successfully overcome. The questionnaire was translated into eight of the nine official EC languages. Greek students were sent a

questionnaire in both English and French, because the Greek translation was not completed in time. Students in Belgium were furnished a questionnaire in both French and Dutch.

Programme administrators at the individual universities were asked by the ERASMUS Bureau in summer 1990 to provide addresses of the students taking part in the ECTS programme. This resulted in about 345 addresses, i.e. 60 percent of the participating students. All of these were sent a questionnaire, except for 34 who had responded the questionnaire already in a pre-test (cf. below). If no addresses were made available, the home institutions of higher education were asked to send questionnaires to the students (165 questionnaires were distributed that way). Thus, altogether 510 of 553 ECTS students 1989/90 were provided with a questionnaire.

Thirty-four of the respondents participated at an ECTS Student Meeting on 29-30 October 1990 in Louvain-La-Neuve, (organized by the ERASMUS Bureau and the Task Force of Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth) which was intended to provide first-hand information on students' experience abroad and of the ECTS programme operation. A first version of the ECTS questionnaire was sent to these students a few weeks in advance in order to collect information which could be used as feedback material at the meeting and in order to identify questions which were difficult to answer or were frequently misunderstood. As the draft questionnaire worked well in most parts, the responses to the draft questionnaire were incorporated into the final data set.

The questionnaire was revised in December 1990 and January 1991. A front page was added containing a short address by the head of the research project, explaining the intentions of the survey and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality as well as explanations of major terms used (e.g. the term "university" refers to all institutions recognized as institutions of higher education in the EC Member States). A return envelope and postage stamps were provided.

The questionnaire was mailed by the ERASMUS Bureau in the first week of February 1991, i.e. at the time when all students had not only completed the study period in the host country, but also had experienced life and study at the home institution again, and in most cases knew the outcome of the credit transfer process. All students not responding within six weeks were sent a reminder letter.

The pattern of weekly responses is shown in Chart 1.1. Four peaks of responses can be observed over a time-span of 20 weeks, with the highest in the second and third week after mailing the questionnaires and another one two weeks after sending the reminder letter.

Of the 510 questionnaires, 34 were returned by the participants of the ECTS meeting in October 1990. Altogether, 339 students responded to the questionnaire within 20 weeks (including the 34 students responding to the pretest). Thus, 66.5 percent of the ECTS students addressed actually (61.3 % of all ECTS students in 1989/90) provided feedback of their experience as Table 1.1 shows. The response rate is identical to that in the ERASMUS 1988/89 student survey (66.8 %), although the ECTS student questionnaire was substantially longer than the questionnaire sent to ERASMUS students of the preceding year. This indicates the students' extraordinarily high willingness to support an evaluation of this student mobility programme.

Chart 1.1
Return of the Questionnaires

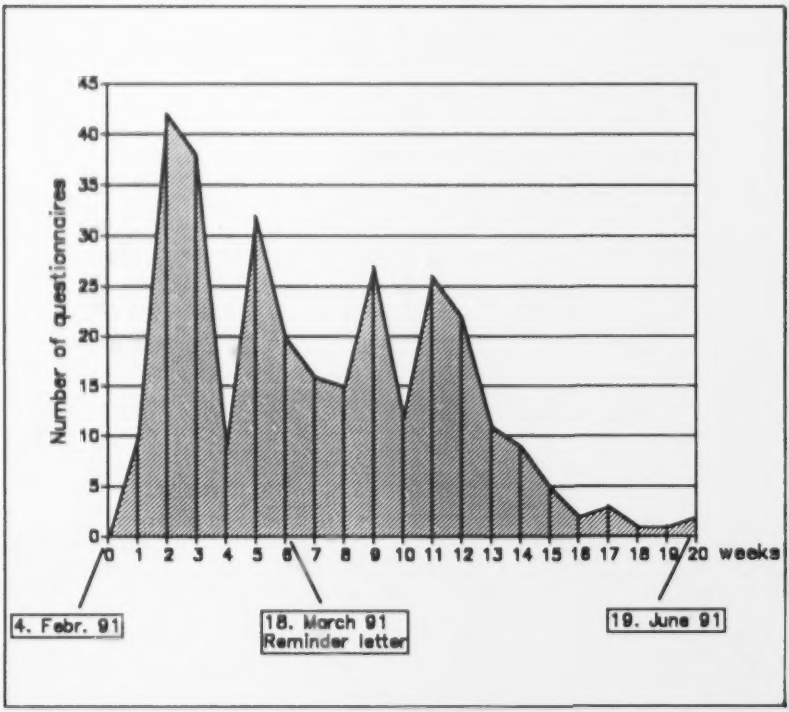


Table 1.1
Return Rate by Country of Home Institution

Country of home institution	Valid addresses		Respondents		
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Return rate
B	33	6.5	24	7.1	72.7
D	111	21.8	70	20.6	63.1
DK	14	2.7	13	3.8	92.9
E	80	15.7	56	16.5	70.0
F	102	20.0	47	13.9	46.1
G	26	5.1	18	5.3	69.2
I	43	8.4	33	9.7	76.7
IRL	19	3.7	12	3.5	63.2
NL	31	6.1	21	6.2	67.7
P	19	3.7	15	4.4	78.9
UK	32	6.3	30	8.8	93.8
Total	510	100.0	339	100.0	66.5

A comparison of the profile of the 339 students actually responding to the questionnaire with the 553 students participating in the ECTS programme in 1989/90 indicates an under-representation of French students among the respondents (see Table 1.2), a balanced representation of host countries, and finally an over-representation of students in mechanical engineering and an under-representation of business administration. The over-representation and under-representation according to standard statistical criteria were very low in most cases and should not lead to a substantial bias of major findings (the data set also includes one student spending the period in Luxembourg whose responses are not shown in host country tables in order to ensure confidentiality).

Table 1.2
Distribution of ECTS Students 89/90 in the ECTS-Survey 1991, by Country of Home Institution

Country of home institution	All ECTS students 89/90		Participants in ECTS survey	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
B	33	6.0	24	7.1
D	106	19.2	70	20.6
DK	23	4.2	13	3.8
E	84	15.2	56	16.5
F	105	19.0	47	13.9
G	30	5.4	18	5.3
I	47	8.5	33	9.7
IRL	24	4.3	12	3.5
NL	39	7.1	21	6.2
P	25	4.5	15	4.4
UK	37	6.7	30	8.8
Total	553	100.0	339	100.0

Are the experiences of ECTS students in 1989/90 a characteristic of the particular structure of the programme or are they a normal part of the wide range of possible experiences in the framework of study abroad within ERASMUS? To answer this question it is necessary to have a yardstick which allows us to find out which of the experiences are more specific and which are commonplace. One way of doing this is to compare the experiences of ECTS students in 1989/90 with those of the ICP students in 1988/89 who had been surveyed with an almost identical questionnaire. The fact that the composition of participants in ICP and ECTS programmes are quite different could lead to methodological problems with this approach. The biggest difference between ICP and ECTS is of course that ICP programmes cover all fields of study while ECTS is only concerned with five special subject areas.

In order to ensure the comparability of ECTS and ICP students regarding those aspects which were strongly related to subject areas, we selected a sample of ICP students who were "similar" to the ECTS students according to

the following criteria: country of home institution, country of host institution and field of study (business studies, engineering, humanities, medical and natural sciences). In the following chapters, we call this sample of ICP students the "ICP comparison group".

This report is based on the experiences of the first cohort of ECTS students. We have to bear in mind that differences in the experiences of ECTS students in 1989/90 and ICP students in 1988/89 might be caused by the quick start of the ECTS programme in the year of its inauguration. The participating institutions and students were informed about their selection for the pilot project only weeks before the programme started.

Formal checks of the responses and the coding of open questions were the responsibility of members of the research team at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work in Kassel or of students from the respective countries helping the research team. The data processing and statistical analysis was undertaken with the help of the Siemens BS2000 computer of the Comprehensive University of Kassel and of IBM personal computers of the Centre. Programme packages SPSS-X served the statistical analysis and the provision of tables.

2

The Participating Students

2.1 Basic Profile Data

ECTS students were asked to provide basic information which served both to describe the structure of the programmes and the characteristics of the participating students. Data items collected about the programme structure were country of home institution of higher education and country of host institution, field of study, and duration of the study period abroad: data on age, period of prior study, nationality, sex, parents' educational background, prior stays abroad, changes of field of study, and family status were also collected to provide student profiles for participating students. In addition, students were asked to state their motives for studying abroad in general as well as the reasons for selecting their particular host institution in preference to other institutions within the ECTS scheme. All data presented in this chapter are used in describing the characteristics of the students who reported their experiences regarding studying abroad in the framework of ECTS?

For convenience sake, we talk of "British", "French", "Spanish" students etc. in the subsequent text if we refer to the country of the home institution of higher education; we do so because all major issues of this study refer to contrasts or cooperation between partner institutions of higher education from the respective countries. It should be mentioned in this context, that 4 percent of the students were "foreigners", i.e. not citizens of the country of the home institution of higher education.

The largest proportion of ECTS students in 1988/89 who responded to this survey questionnaire studied prior to their sojourn in the Federal Republic of Germany (21%). About 17 percent of the students came from institutions of higher education in Spain, as Table 2.1 shows, and about 10 percent each were

from institutions in France (13 %), Italy (10 %), and the United Kingdom (9%). Seven percent of the students came from Belgian and Dutch institutions, 6 percent from Greek, and finally 4 percent each from Danish, Irish, and Portuguese institutions.

The major host countries of the ECTS students surveyed were the United Kingdom (31 %) and France (19 %), while only 11 percent each of the students went to the two largest sending countries, i.e. Germany and Spain. The remaining 28 percent of the ECTS students went to institutions of higher education in the other eight participating Member States - ranging from less than 1 percent (Luxembourg) to 7 percent (Belgium and Italy). The participating British universities hosted 3.6 times as many of the students surveyed as they sent, and French and Irish universities, too, received somewhat more ECTS students than they sent. In contrast, German institutions hosted only half the number of students they sent abroad: Dutch, Greek (0.4 each), Danish (0.6), Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese (0.7 each) institutions also had a low "import" ratio. Only Belgian institutions sent about as many students as they received.

Table 2.1
Country of Home Institution and Host Country (absolute numbers)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
B	0	6	2	2	3	0	3	0	3	0	5	24
D	5	0	3	10	16	0	3	4	2	4	23	70
DK	0	1	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	5	13
E	7	2	0	0	13	1	7	5	1	3	17	56
F	3	7	0	9	0	0	5	3	1	1	17	46
GR	3	3	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	7	18
I	1	1	0	5	4	4	0	2	0	0	16	33
IRL	2	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	5	12
NL	0	4	0	3	7	0	0	1	0	0	6	21
P	0	0	0	5	3	0	2	1	0	0	4	15
UK	1	12	1	2	8	2	1	1	2	0	0	30
Total	22	37	7	39	65	7	22	17	9	8	105	338

Question 2.5: Please state country of university.

The ECTS pilot scheme comprises five fields of study: business administration, history, chemistry, medicine, and mechanical engineering. As Table 2.2 shows, more than one quarter of the respondents were enrolled in business administration during their ECTS study period abroad, about one fifth each in mechanical engineering and medicine, and slightly less in the fields of history and chemistry. Two of the students surveyed (0.6 %) were not enrolled in the same field of study at their home institution and in their ECTS study period abroad.

Table 2.2
Field of Study During Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution
(percent)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Business administration	17	17	15	34	28	28	24	42	43	13	40	27
History	13	16	23	14	13	17	27	25	10	27	17	17
Chemistry	25	13	31	16	13	11	18	25	5	0	17	15
Medicine	21	29	15	7	17	39	18	0	38	33	7	20
Mechanical engineering	25	26	15	29	30	6	12	8	5	27	20	22
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(24)	(70)	(13)	(56)	(47)	(18)	(33)	(12)	(21)	(15)	(30)	(339)

Question 2.3: Please state your major field of study and tick the respective group of fields.

Students surveyed spent on average 8.2 months abroad in the framework of the ECTS scheme, somewhat higher than the average duration of 7.1 months for ICP students surveyed in 1988/89. As Table 2.3 shows, only 4 percent of students spent three months abroad, while 33 percent spent 4-6 months and 63 percent more than 6 months abroad. On average, Danish (5.8 months) and Dutch students (6.0 months) spent the shortest periods abroad; periods longer than average were reported by Spanish (9.9 months), Portuguese (9.8 months), Italian (8.9 months) and French students (8.8 months). The average duration did not differ markedly according to the field of study.

73 percent of the ECTS students (as compared to 65 percent of the ICP students surveyed in 1988/89) were solely engaged in full-time study during the period abroad and a further 14 percent in part-time study. Work placements were taken up by 16 percent of the students - 8 percent of these in addition to full-time study. 12 percent mentioned work on thesis either solely or in addition to other activities. Work placements were most common among students in medical fields (42 %) and lasted 6.0 months on average.

Table 2.3
Duration of ECTS Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
3 months	4	1	15	0	2	6	0	25	5	7	3	4
4-6 months	54	49	62	0	19	61	27	25	62	0	40	33
7-12 months	42	50	23	100	79	33	73	50	33	93	57	63
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(24)	(70)	(13)	(56)	(47)	(18)	(33)	(12)	(21)	(15)	(30)	(339)

Question 2.4: Please state the duration of the ECTS period abroad (including work placement and holiday periods).

2.2 Select Biographical Information

About 59 percent of the ECTS students were between 21 and 23 years old at the time they went abroad within the ECTS scheme. Altogether, only 7 percent of the ECTS students were older than 25 years, and the average age reported was 23.0 years. In comparison, ICP students surveyed in 1988/89 were 23.4 years old, and 13 percent were older than 25. Female ECTS students were one year younger on average (22.4 years) than their male counterparts (23.5 years). Irish and British students were the youngest on average (21.0 and 21.5 years), while Danish (25.6 years), German (24.4 years), Belgian (23.4 years), and Spanish students (22.9 years) were the oldest on average.

The differences in the age at the time of the study abroad period reflect to some extent - in addition to the age at the time of the first enrolment - the timing of the study abroad period in the overall course of study. As Table 2.4

shows, the third and fourth year of study were the most common stages in which students went abroad (altogether 55%); 19 percent went in their fifth year of study and 15 percent in their second year. For British and Irish students, it was more common to go abroad at an earlier stage - 90 percent and 75 percent respectively went abroad not later than their third year of study, while especially for Danish students, but also for German, Belgian, and Spanish students, it was not unusual to go abroad during the fifth year of study or even later. This of course reflects the differing lengths of third level courses within higher education institutions in the Member States.

Table 2.4
Study Period in Major Field of Study Completed Prior to Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

	Country of home institution											Total
Years	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Beginner	0	0	0	4	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1
< 1	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	1
1 - 1.9	8	26	0	7	13	0	9	42	0	15	37	15
2 - 2.9	4	20	46	11	21	39	27	33	62	15	53	26
3 - 3.9	50	30	8	27	45	22	45	25	19	15	3	29
4 - 4.9	17	17	31	30	17	22	12	0	19	31	7	19
5 - 5.9	13	3	8	18	4	11	3	0	0	8	0	7
6 - 6.9	8	0	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	1
7 and more	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(24)	(70)	(13)	(56)	(47)	(18)	(33)	(12)	(21)	(13)	(30)	(337)

Question 2.1: How long was the period of study you had completed in your major field of study prior to your ECTS period abroad?

The timing of the study abroad period differed by field of study, as Table 2.5 indicates. Students enrolled in business administration went abroad at a relatively early stage in their course of study - more than half during the third year

or earlier. On the other hand, study periods at relatively late stages were reported by students in medicine, chemistry, and mechanical engineering.

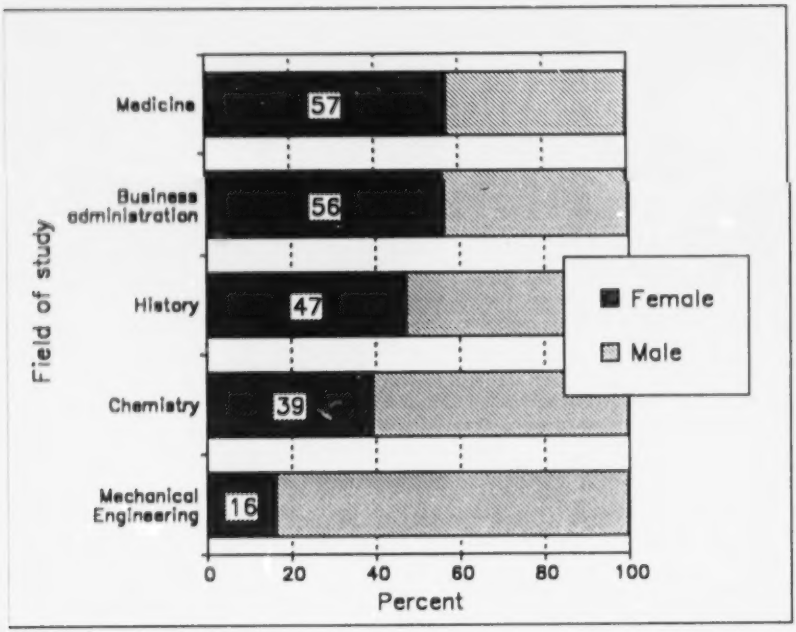
Table 2.5
Study Period in Major Field of Study Completed Prior to Study Period Abroad, by Field of Study (percent)

Years	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Beginner	0	2	2	0	1	1
< 1	1	4	0	0	1	1
1 - 1.9	22	11	6	15	16	15
2 - 2.9	36	38	24	13	18	26
3 - 3.9	23	27	37	31	32	29
4 - 4.9	14	11	27	22	21	19
5 - 5.9	3	5	4	12	8	7
6 - 6.9	0	0	0	4	1	1
7 and more	0	2	0	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(91)	(55)	(51)	(67)	(73)	(337)

Question 2.1: How long was the period of study you had completed in your major field of study prior to your ECTS period abroad?

56 percent of the ECTS students surveyed in 1989/90 were male compared with 44 percent of ICP students in the previous year. As Chart 2.1 shows this higher ratio might be due to the characteristics of the fields of study included in the ECTS programme (business administration, history, medicine, chemistry, and mechanical engineering) since male students clearly dominated in mechanical engineering (84 %) and chemistry (61 %); they also comprised about half in history (53 %), and somewhat less than half in business administration (44 %) and medicine (43 %). Those fields predominantly chosen by female students - such as foreign languages or teacher training - are not included in the ECTS pilot scheme.

Chart 2.1
Gender of ECTS Students, by Field of Study (percent)



With regard to parental educational background, too, ECTS students in 1989/90 were more "traditional" in their profile than ICP students in 1988/89. Twenty-one percent of the ECTS students (as compared to 14 % of the ICP students in the preceding year) reported that both parents were graduates from institutions of higher education, and in a further 24 percent of the cases, only the fathers or - in a few exceptional cases (2 %) - only the mothers were graduates.

The percentage of ECTS students with higher education-trained parents (either both or one of them) varied substantially according to home country. It was highest in Italy (67 %), Greece (61 %), and Belgium (54 %), and between 30 and 50 percent in the other EC member states. As Table 2.6 shows, 71 percent of students enrolled in medicine reported that both or one of their parents had completed a degree, while this ratio varied from 37 to 45 percent for those students enrolled in other fields.

Table 2.6
Proportion of ECTS Students' Higher Education Trained Parents by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Both	19	23	14	33	14	21
Father	18	21	27	36	21	24
Mother	2	2	4	2	3	2
None	62	54	55	29	63	53
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(91)	(56)	(51)	(66)	(72)	(336)

Question 1.4: What is the highest level of education attained by your father and mother?

Almost all students surveyed (91 %) had spent some period abroad since they were 15 years old prior to their ECTS study period, with half of those spending some period in their ECTS host country. The average total duration of such visits abroad was 8.3 months (for all respondents) compared with 6.1 months for ICP students in 1988/89; visits to the host country averaged 2.2 months compared with 1.9 months for ICP students.

8 percent of the ECTS students lived with a partner immediately before their ECTS period abroad, and 1 percent had children. Half of them left their partner and children behind in the home country while studying abroad. These data correspond to those of the ICP students in 1988/89.

2.3 Motives

The students were asked to state which motives influenced their decision to study abroad. Gaining new experiences (personal experiences as well as unspecified study experiences) played the most important role in the decision to study abroad. Many students stated that the desire to gain the experience of studying in another country played an important role (96 % answered 1 or 2 on a scale from 1 = "strong influence" to 5 = "no influence at all") as well as the opportunity for self-development (74 %) and the desire to enhance their

understanding of the particular host country (69 %); 59 percent said that the desire to become acquainted with other teaching methods had a strong influence on their decision to study abroad, while other academic reasons - such as the desire to become acquainted with subject matters not offered at the home institution (31 %) - played a less important role than motives such as "wanting a break from usual surroundings" (59 %), "desire to travel", and "desire to gain another perspective on the home country" (54 % each).

There were differences in views by students in different fields of study: for example above average "acquaintance with subject matters not offered at the home institution" was given as a motive for studying abroad from 51 percent of the students in history, as Table 2.7 shows, while "other teaching methods" was given as the main reason by 75 percent of the students enrolled in medicine.

Table 2.7
Motives for Studying Abroad, by Field of Study (percent*)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
New subject matters	33	51	35	24	14	31
Better examination results	19	7	8	5	0	8
Other teaching methods	61	72	45	75	41	59
Desire to gain study experience in another country	98	95	92	99	95	96
Desire to travel	60	54	58	53	53	56
Other friends were going	4	4	4	6	5	5
Desire to gain another perspective	57	58	45	55	53	54
Enhancing understanding of host country	67	75	67	67	68	69
Wanted a break	53	66	62	58	58	59
Opportunity to establish ties with family/ethnic heritage	7	9	10	13	3	8
Self-development	88	63	71	69	71	74
Not thought much of it	17	18	18	3	12	14

Question 1.7: Which of the following reasons influenced your decision to study abroad?
* Percent responding either "1" or "2" on a scale from 1 = "strong influence" to 5 = "no influence"

3

Academic and Administrative Support

3.1 Ways and Areas of Preparation

As a rule, students have to anticipate the challenges presented by life and study abroad and to prepare themselves in various ways prior to the study abroad period. It is generally assumed that preparation helps reduce feelings of uncertainty and ensures the acquisition of knowledge necessary to ease integration and to cope with the academic requirements during the study period abroad. One might therefore expect that ECTS programmes, similarly to many Inter-University Co-operation Programmes, would offer preparatory courses, arrange preparatory meetings, and possibly provide written material for the students' preparation. On the other hand the ECTS Programme was introduced very rapidly in the year of its inauguration thus reducing the time available for extensive preparatory work: in most cases, the decision on participation reached the institutions only a few weeks before the first students were sent out.

As the ECTS student survey 1989/90 shows:

- 65 percent of the students prepared themselves through self-study;
- 46 percent made use of written material provided;
- 38 percent attended optional preparatory courses;
- 22 percent took part in preparatory meetings; and
- 15 percent attended mandatory courses of preparation for the study period abroad.

In looking at the proportion of students making use of the most highly organized preparatory provisions (see Table 3.1), we note that:

- 15 percent of the ECTS students participated in mandatory preparatory courses (sometimes additionally in optional courses and/or meetings);
- 31 percent participated at least in optional preparatory courses (sometimes also in meetings); and
- 10 percent attended preparatory meetings as a minimum.

Thus, a total of 55 percent of ECTS students participated in preparatory meetings and courses. Of the remaining students:

- 29 percent said they had prepared themselves for the study period abroad but without attending meetings and courses (though possibly with the help of written material provided);
- 9 percent stated that they went abroad without any specific preparation; and
- 6 percent did not provide any information on whether they had prepared themselves and, if so, how.

Table 3.1
Ways of Preparation for the Study Period Abroad, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Provision of written material	46	47	57	36	45	46
Meetings	32	25	18	13	16	22
Courses: mandatory	27	12	12	9	11	15
Courses: optional	30	37	29	40	52	38
Self-study	65	70	61	66	62	65
No preparation	9	7	12	4	12	9
Not ticked	2	4	2	16	4	6
Total	212	202	190	187	203	200
(n)	(91)	(57)	(51)	(67)	(73)	(339)

Question 3.1: How did you prepare for your stay abroad before you actually left? Which courses did you attend?

Clearly, a smaller proportion of ECTS students in 1989/90 had made use of preparatory provisions or prepared themselves for the study period than ICP students in 1988/89. Participation in mandatory preparation courses was much more common among ICP students (51 % for all ICP students and 41 % for the comparison group) than among ECTS students (15 %). Also the percentage of ECTS students participating in meetings was only half that for ICP students in 1988/89. As stated at the beginning of the chapter, one main reason for the less frequent participation of ECTS students in preparation courses and meetings could be the rapid start of the Pilot Scheme and the relatively short time for institutions to organize preparatory provisions.

Low participation rates in preparatory courses or meetings were particularly marked, as Table 3.2 shows, in the case of ECTS students from Belgium (29 %) and Greece (32 %). About half of Spanish, French, and Irish students attended courses and meetings, while the respective participation rate was highest among British, German (69 % each), and Portuguese students (67 %).

Table 3.2
Ways of Preparation for the Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Provision of Written material	38	70	46	30	30	22	55	25	57	47	53	46
Meetings	8	24	15	18	13	28	21	8	24	27	47	22
Courses: mandatory	4	16	8	9	30	0	18	17	19	0	27	15
Courses: optional	25	51	38	38	32	17	36	33	38	53	33	38
Self-study	50	77	69	71	57	72	64	75	62	47	47	65
No preparation	21	3	8	5	13	22	6	8	5	7	13	9
Not ticked	13	4	8	5	9	0	3	0	10	7	3	6
Total	158	246	192	177	183	161	203	167	219	187	227	200
(n)	(24)	(70)	(13)	(56)	(47)	(18)	(33)	(12)	(21)	(15)	(30)	(339)

Question 3.1: How did you prepare for your stay abroad before you actually left? Which courses did you attend?

In comparing participation in organized ways of preparation in the different fields of study, we note the highest participation rates in students of mechanical engineering and business administration (about two thirds of the students). Modest participation in preparatory courses or meetings can be noted in chemistry students (43 %).

The data available allow us to examine how many students actually could have made use of courses or meetings before the study abroad period as 62 percent of the ECTS students stated (in response to a corresponding question) that preparation had been provided. There were substantial differences in the level of preparatory provisions according to the country of the home institution of higher education. Three quarters of students from Denmark, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom stated that preparation was provided by their home institution. On the other hand, less then half of the students from Belgium and Greece were provided with means of preparation by their home institutions. By and large, we note that the level of participation in preparatory activities on the part of the students was clearly influenced by the preparatory provisions offered by the institutions.

One third of the participants in preparatory courses reported that at least some of those courses were part of the regular course programme. This was most often stated by British (56 %) and Dutch students (50 %). Only one out of eight students from Belgium, Spain, Ireland, and Portugal had preparatory courses recognized as part of their regular course programme.

A substantially lower ratio of ECTS students in 1989/90 prepared themselves for their study period abroad than had ICP students in 1988/89 (data in brackets). For example:

- preparation regarding host country culture and society (see Table 3.3) was undertaken by 51 percent of ECTS students (ICP 67 %), 6 percent of them (20 %) with the help of respective courses provided;
- academic preparation (see Table 3.4) was undertaken by 35 percent of ECTS students (61 %), 9 percent (42 %) with the help of respective courses provided;
- foreign language preparation (see Table 3.5) was undertaken by 69 percent of ECTS students (78 %), 12 percent (41 %) with the help of respective mandatory courses provided; and
- preparation regarding practical matters (see Table 3.6) was undertaken by 56 percent of ECTS students (67 %), 17 percent (32 %) with the help of meetings.

Table 3.3
Ways of Preparation for the Study Period Abroad Regarding Society and Culture of Host Country, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Written material	21	21	25	13	23	21
Meetings	8	2	6	3	5	5
Courses: mandatory	7	0	0	1	1	2
Courses: optional	2	7	2	1	8	4
Self-study	34	39	24	34	33	33
No preparation	44	40	53	39	42	43
Not ticked	2	4	2	16	4	6
Total	118	112	112	109	118	114
(n)	(91)	(57)	(51)	(67)	(73)	(339)

Question 3.1: How did you prepare for your stay abroad before you actually left? Which courses did you attend?

Table 3.4
Ways of Academic Preparation for the Study Period Abroad, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Written material	10	9	16	4	15	11
Meetings	7	7	2	4	3	5
Courses: mandatory	13	2	4	3	5	6
Courses: optional	2	0	6	6	3	3
Self-study	15	30	18	31	11	20
No preparation	60	56	65	45	68	59
Not ticked	2	4	2	16	4	6
Total	110	107	112	110	110	110
(n)	(91)	(57)	(51)	(67)	(73)	(339)

Question 3.1: How did you prepare for your stay abroad before you actually left? Which courses did you attend?

Table 3.5
Ways of Linguistic Preparation for the Study Period Abroad, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Written material	12	14	14	4	11	11
Meetings	3	2	2	0	1	2
Courses: mandatory	26	11	8	1	7	12
Courses: optional	26	35	25	34	51	35
Self-study	44	44	55	45	48	47
No preparation	25	23	35	21	25	25
Not ticked	2	4	2	16	4	6
Total	140	132	141	122	147	137
(n)	(91)	(57)	(51)	(67)	(73)	(339)

Question 3.1: How did you prepare for your stay abroad before you actually left? Which courses did you attend?

Table 3.6
Ways of Preparation for the Study Period Abroad Regarding Practical Matters of Living and Studying in Host Country, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Written material	30	28	39	33	34	32
Meetings	27	21	12	12	8	17
Courses: mandatory	0	2	0	3	1	1
Courses: optional	5	2	0	1	3	3
Self-study	29	32	14	19	23	24
No preparation	32	35	47	33	47	38
Not ticked	2	4	2	16	4	6
Total	125	123	114	118	121	121
(n)	(91)	(57)	(51)	(67)	(73)	(339)

Question 3.1: How did you prepare for your stay abroad before you actually left? Which courses did you attend?

About two-thirds of ECTS students prepared themselves on practical matters and the culture and society of the host country, mostly through self-study and the use of written material - only 9 percent attended courses for those purposes. The highest proportion of students preparing themselves on practical matters and on host country culture and society were from Germany and Britain, while Spanish and Portuguese students paid least attention to those aspects.

Only about one third of ECTS students participated in any academic preparation for the study period abroad. Again, self-study and use of written material prevailed, while only about one tenth of the students prepared themselves academically by attending courses. Courses offering academic preparation were most often attended by students in business administration (19 %). Notably, British students (43 %) were most likely to attend such courses while Danish students were least likely.

ECTS students in 1989/90 gave the highest priority to foreign language preparation: 70 percent prepared themselves linguistically, 47 percent each through self-study and through participation in courses, while 12 percent attended mandatory language courses.

More than half of ECTS students going to Greece, about half going to Belgium, and almost half of those going to Denmark did not state any linguistic preparation, as Table 3.7 shows. This largely corresponds to the findings of the 1988/89 ICP student survey, where also most students going to these countries did not prepare linguistically. Most of the ECTS students going to Greece and Denmark without linguistic preparation immediately before the study period abroad did not take courses in the host country language during their study period abroad. It should be noted that instruction in languages other than the host country languages played the strongest role in these three countries. It should also be noted that 37 percent of students going to the United Kingdom did not undertake any foreign language preparation, while almost all students going to Portugal, Italy, Spain, and France prepared themselves linguistically. Participation in foreign language courses was most frequent among students going to Portugal (63 %), Ireland (59 %), and Spain (56 %).

Altogether, a lower percentage of students enrolled in medicine and chemistry (37 %) prepared themselves not linguistically than students from other fields. The differences by field of study are, however, by no means extreme in this respect (27 to 37 %).

Table 3.7
Ways of Linguistic Preparation for the Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (percent)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Written material	0	19	14	21	11	0	14	24	11	0	6	11
Meetings	0	3	14	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
Courses: mandatory	0	22	29	13	11	0	0	18	22	0	12	12
Courses: optional	27	32	14	51	42	14	50	47	33	63	22	35
Self-study	41	30	43	49	57	29	50	53	56	75	43	46
No preparation	32	32	43	15	14	57	9	18	11	0	37	25
Not ticked	18	3	0	3	5	0	9	0	22	0	6	6
Total	118	141	157	154	138	100	132	159	156	138	129	137
(n)	(22)	(37)	(7)	(39)	(65)	(7)	(22)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(105)	(338)

Question 3.1: How did you prepare for your stay abroad before you actually left? Which courses did you attend?

3.2 Assessment of Preparatory Provisions

The assessment of the preparatory provisions turned out not to be very enthusiastic. The overall assessment was 3.0 on a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = "very poor". Provisions of academic preparation, those regarding host country culture and society as well as those on practical matters of living and studying abroad each were rated 3.2 on average, while foreign language preparation was more favourably assessed (2.5). ICP students of the preceding year assessed preparatory provisions similarly with one exception: they appreciated the academic preparation more (2.8 for both the comparison group and all ICP-students) than the 1989/90 ECTS students did (3.2).

As Table 3.8 shows, ECTS students enrolled in history and medicine assessed preparatory provisions regarding their individual tasks less favourably than students of the other fields of study. History students were least satisfied with academic preparation as well as preparation on practical matters, while chemistry students assessed preparation regarding culture and society most negatively.

Table 3.8
Assessment of Preparatory Provision for the Study Period Abroad, by Field of Study (mean*)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Assessment of preparation on practical matters	2.9	3.7	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.2
Assessment of culture preparation	2.9	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.1	3.2
Assessment of academic preparation	3.0	3.7	2.9	3.3	3.3	3.2
Assessment of linguistic preparation	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.3	2.5
Overall assessment of preparatory provision	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.1	2.9	3.0
(n)	(54)	(30)	(31)	(28)	(49)	(192)

Question 3.2: How do you assess the preparatory provision?
* On a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = " very poor"

In excluding provisions for foreign language preparation which are generally most positively assessed we observe that notably Spanish, Greek and Portuguese ECTS students rated the preparatory provisions of their home institutions more negatively than students from other countries. As Table 3.9 shows, Belgian and French students also considered some aspects less favourably, while Danish and Irish students were most satisfied with the preparatory provisions.

Table 3.9
Assessment of Preparatory Provision for the Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (mean*)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Assessment of preparation on practical matters	3.4	3.3	3.0	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.2	2.5	3.0	3.6	3.0	3.2
Assessment of culture preparation	3.5	3.1	2.7	3.6	2.9	3.8	3.3	2.7	2.8	3.8	3.0	3.2
Assessment of academic preparation	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.5	4.1	3.9	2.9	3.0	2.8	4.0	2.7	3.2
Assessment of linguistic preparation	2.6	2.0	2.7	2.7	2.8	3.6	2.5	2.5	1.9	2.8	3.1	2.5
Overall assessment of preparatory provision	3.1	3.0	2.6	2.8	3.2	3.4	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.8	3.3	3.0
(n)	(9)	(39)	(9)	(30)	(21)	(9)	(22)	(7)	(14)	(12)	(20)	(192)

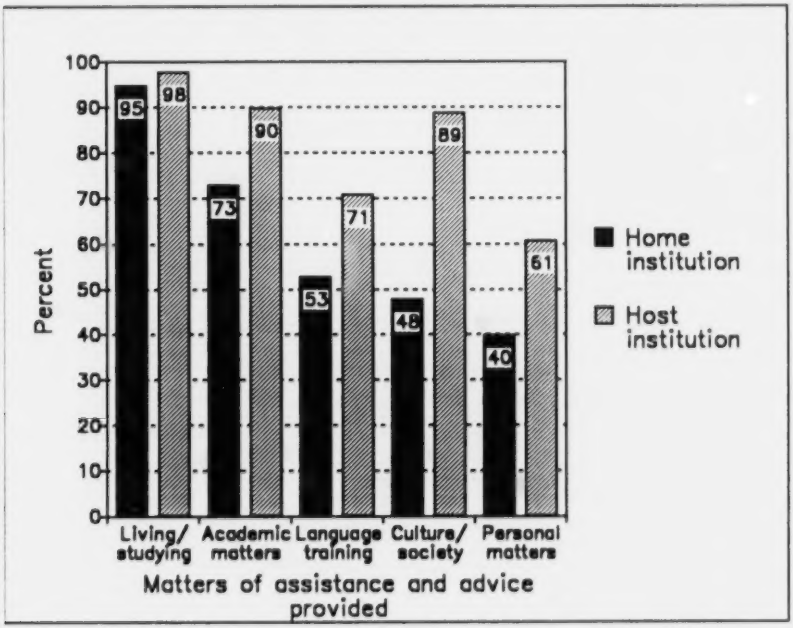
Question 3.2: How do you assess the preparatory provision?
* On a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = " very poor"

3.3 Assistance and Advice Provided by Home and Host Institution

In addition to issues of preparation, students also were asked about the assistance, guidance, and advice they were provided by their home and by their host institutions concerning the study period abroad. They were asked to state both the extent to which they were provided assistance ("substantial", "modest", "none"), and the degree of satisfaction they felt with the assistance (scale from 1 = "very high" to 5 = "very low"). They were provided a list of 13 categories, which refer - like the questions about preparation - to academic issues, foreign language, host culture and society, as well as practical matters abroad. In addition, students were asked about the advice and assistance provided by the home and host institution regarding personal matters. While foreign language, academic and personal matters were referred to in an aggregate way, specific

aspects of living and studying abroad were addressed as well as aspects of the culture and society of the host country.

Chart 3.1
Proportion of Students Provided with Assistance/Guidance/Advice by the Home Institution Prior to the Study Period Abroad and by the Host Institution During Period Abroad (percent)



Question 4.2: To what extent were you provided with assistance/guidance/advice concerning your ECTS study period abroad, by your home university prior to the study period abroad and by your host university?

Almost all students were provided assistance in one way or the other. Only 1 percent reported no assistance in any of the 13 categories by the host institution of higher education and only 3 percent no assistance by the home institution. Except for financial matters, the respective host institutions provided more assistance than the home institutions, as a comparison of Tables 3.10 and 3.11 indicates.

Assistance varied substantially by area (see Chart 3.1). No assistance, guidance, and advice was provided, according to the students' statements, regarding:

- living and studying abroad: no guidance from the home institution reported by 5 percent of the students compared with 2 percent reporting on the host institution;
- academic matters: no guidance from the home institution reported by 27 percent of students compared with 10 percent reporting on the host institution;
- foreign language training: no guidance from the home institution reported by 47 percent of the students compared with 29 percent reporting on the host institution;
- culture and society: no guidance from the home institution reported by 52 percent of the students compared with 11 percent from the host institution; and finally
- personal matters: no guidance from the home institution reported by 60 percent of the students compared with 39 percent reporting about the host institution of higher education.

Table 3.10
Assistance/Guidance/Advice Provided by Home Institution, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
University registration etc. at host institution												
Substantial	41	26	15	46	24	38	33	50	29	67	38	35
Modest	50	46	62	38	67	44	48	42	57	33	45	48
None	9	28	23	16	9	19	18	8	14	0	17	17
Accommodation												
Substantial	22	20	15	22	24	35	27	25	5	47	21	23
Modest	17	23	23	27	22	24	12	50	43	33	29	25
None	61	57	62	51	54	41	61	25	52	20	50	52
Matters regarding students financial support												
Substantial	36	40	46	38	34	47	30	50	38	27	29	37
Modest	36	30	54	46	30	41	42	50	48	53	54	41
None	27	30	0	16	36	12	27	0	14	20	18	22
Other practical matters (e.g. insurance etc.)												
Substantial	13	12	8	11	12	6	9	0	5	0	7	9
Modest	22	28	23	26	34	29	31	25	29	47	21	28
None	65	61	69	63	54	65	59	75	67	53	72	63
Academic matters												
Substantial	22	22	15	24	24	0	39	17	20	33	24	23
Modest	39	52	54	57	39	72	35	83	30	53	52	50
None	39	26	31	19	37	28	26	0	50	13	24	27
Work placement matters												
Substantial	8	26	0	0	9	0	8	0	19	20	20	11
Modest	33	21	30	9	18	22	25	50	25	0	50	23
None	58	53	70	91	73	78	67	50	56	80	30	66
Information on the host country univ.												
Substantial	13	13	0	11	15	6	3	17	14	20	10	11
Modest	39	57	38	51	49	63	31	58	38	40	38	47
None	48	30	62	38	36	31	66	25	48	40	52	42

(to be cont.)

(Table 3.10 cont.)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Language training												
Substantial	17	33	15	20	12	6	21	44	33	21	37	24
Modest	29	24	23	28	47	12	27	22	33	50	26	30
None	54	42	62	52	42	82	52	33	33	29	37	47
The host country in general												
Substantial	8	10	0	4	4	6	15	9	14	20	21	10
Modest	17	21	23	35	36	41	18	18	33	47	24	28
None	75	69	77	61	60	53	67	73	52	33	55	62
The local community												
Substantial	13	4	0	4	7	0	3	0	14	0	0	5
Modest	9	18	15	21	33	18	21	25	29	29	21	22
None	78	78	85	75	60	82	76	75	57	71	79	74
Personal matters												
Substantial	18	18	8	6	20	12	12	8	5	8	4	12
Modest	23	22	15	19	25	59	27	25	52	38	32	28
None	59	60	77	76	55	29	61	67	43	54	64	60
Social contacts with host country nationals												
Substantial	13	4	0	2	10	6	9	0	19	0	7	7
Modest	4	13	23	15	24	41	18	17	29	43	30	20
None	83	82	77	83	66	53	73	83	52	57	63	73
Cultural, sports, recreational activities												
Substantial	9	4	0	4	7	6	6	0	14	23	3	6
Modest	9	9	15	15	33	24	15	33	19	15	14	17
None	83	87	85	81	60	71	79	67	67	62	83	77

Question 4.2: To what extent were you provided with assistance/guidance/advice concerning your ECTS study period abroad, by your home university prior to the study period abroad and by your host university?

It was expected that host institutions would play a more important role in assistance concerning the study period abroad than the home institutions of higher education, because the host institutions are in the position to provide such assistance more directly and more immediately. If the respective institu-

tions provided assistance in accordance to their potential, one would expect that students' satisfaction with the assistance provided would not differ substantially. Tables 3.12 and 3.13, however, show that students were less satisfied with the assistance and advice provided by the home university (3.2 on average for all categories) than by the host university (2.6, very close to the equivalent score of 2.7 for ICP students in 1988/89).

Table 3.11
Assistance/Guidance/Advice Provided by Host Institution, by Host Country
(percent)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
University registration etc. at host institution												
Substantial	55	43	86	51	61	71	41	82	56	63	62	58
Modest	32	38	14	38	26	14	45	18	44	25	32	32
None	14	19	0	10	13	14	14	0	0	13	6	10
Accommodation												
Substantial	57	59	100	28	55	43	68	75	44	88	60	57
Modest	38	32	0	46	29	29	27	25	33	13	28	30
None	5	8	0	26	16	29	5	0	22	0	13	13
Matters regarding students financial support												
Substantial	5	14	0	0	15	29	10	0	22	13	4	8
Modest	19	22	0	16	23	43	35	31	22	25	24	23
None	76	64	100	84	62	29	55	69	56	63	72	69
Other practical matters (e.g. insurance etc.)												
Substantial	20	22	71	14	31	29	23	25	33	13	22	24
Modest	40	46	29	30	39	43	36	44	0	25	54	42
None	40	32	0	57	31	29	41	31	67	63	23	34
Academic matters												
Substantial	45	38	71	59	49	57	32	71	67	50	54	51
Modest	55	46	29	26	38	29	45	29	33	38	40	39
None	0	16	0	15	13	14	23	0	0	13	6	10

(to be cont.)

(Table 3.11 cont.)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Work placement matters (if applicable)												
Substantial	33	35	50	17	50	20	13	20	67	40	35	36
Modest	44	20	0	25	28	40	25	0	33	20	27	26
None	22	45	50	58	22	40	63	80	0	40	39	39
Information on the host country univ.												
Substantial	36	23	57	42	32	43	32	59	38	13	36	36
Modest	41	51	29	45	48	14	50	29	50	63	50	47
None	23	26	14	13	19	43	18	12	13	25	14	18
Language training												
Substantial	30	26	57	54	32	43	36	20	25	25	34	35
Modest	30	37	29	28	34	29	32	47	13	63	40	36
None	40	37	14	18	34	29	32	33	63	13	25	29
The host country in general												
Substantial	25	32	57	18	18	29	23	53	25	25	19	24
Modest	40	30	29	51	43	29	55	35	38	25	44	42
None	35	38	14	31	38	43	23	12	38	50	37	34
The local community												
Substantial	33	35	57	19	20	33	10	35	13	13	19	23
Modest	24	30	14	38	43	17	71	53	38	38	50	43
None	43	35	29	43	37	50	19	12	50	50	31	34
Personal matters												
Substantial	29	21	29	17	28	50	27	35	14	13	27	26
Modest	19	56	29	37	25	17	27	47	29	13	41	35
None	52	24	43	46	48	33	45	18	57	75	32	39
Social contacts with host country nationals												
Substantial	29	39	29	29	27	67	19	35	13	0	24	28
Modest	38	36	43	32	37	17	43	53	25	57	47	40
None	33	25	29	39	37	17	38	12	63	43	29	32
Cultural, sports, recreational activities												
Substantial	45	59	14	29	45	67	27	82	13	0	53	46
Modest	41	22	43	42	34	17	50	18	50	57	30	34
None	14	19	43	29	21	17	23	0	38	43	17	20

Question 4.2: To what extent were you provided with assistance/guidance/advice concerning your ECTS study period abroad, by your home university prior to the study period abroad and by your host university?

Table 3.12
Degree of Satisfaction with Assistance/Guidance/Advice Provided by Home Institution, by Country of Home Institution (mean*)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
University registration etc. at host institution	2.4	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.9	2.5	2.3	2.7	2.7
Accommodation	3.0	2.8	3.5	3.4	2.8	3.1	3.3	2.9	3.4	2.7	3.5	3.1
Matters regarding students financial support	2.6	2.6	2.2	3.2	2.7	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.1	2.9	3.0	2.7
Other practical matters (e.g. insurance etc.)	2.7	3.1	3.5	3.8	3.2	3.8	3.2	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.4
Academic matters	2.2	2.7	3.0	3.2	3.0	3.4	2.4	2.7	3.2	2.3	3.0	2.9
Work placement matters	2.4	2.4	2.9	4.1	3.3	3.7	3.2	3.7	3.3	4.2	3.6	3.3
Information on the host country univ.	3.2	3.1	3.4	3.7	3.2	3.1	3.5	3.5	3.2	3.0	3.5	3.3
Language training	2.6	2.7	3.3	3.6	2.8	3.9	3.2	2.3	2.4	3.4	2.8	3.0
The host country in general	2.7	3.2	3.2	3.8	3.2	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.1	3.0	3.3	3.3
The local community	2.5	3.4	3.2	4.2	3.1	3.9	3.7	3.7	3.2	4.2	4.0	3.6
Personal matters	2.8	2.9	2.6	3.7	2.9	3.0	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.5	3.7	3.2
Social contacts with host country nationals	2.5	3.3	3.1	4.1	3.0	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.0	4.1	3.9	3.5
Cultural, sports, recreational activities	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.9	2.9	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.2	4.0	4.0	3.5

Question 4.2: To what extent were you provided with assistance/guidance/advice concerning your ECTS study period abroad, by your home university prior to the study period abroad and by your host university? And to what extent were you satisfied with the assistance/ guidance/ advice provided?
* On a scale from 1 = "very high" to 5 = "very low"

In general we note that responses on the amount of assistance and on the satisfaction with the assistance provided correlate positively: the more assistance was provided, the more likely it was to be favourably assessed. This shows that

there was a corresponding demand for assistance, guidance, and advice and that good support provided was appreciated in general. Similar results were observed in respect to the ICP students 1988/89.

Table 3.13
Degree of Satisfaction with Assistance/Guidance/Advice Provided by Host Institution, by Host Country (mean*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
University registration etc. at host institution	2.6	2.7	1.4	2.3	2.4	2.0	2.7	1.6	2.0	2.9	2.0	2.3
Accommodation	2.5	2.3	1.3	3.3	2.5	3.9	2.0	1.7	2.1	2.0	2.3	2.4
Matters regarding students financial support	3.6	3.3	4.4	3.8	3.0	2.7	3.2	3.7	2.6	3.3	3.3	3.3
Other practical matters (e.g. insurance etc.)	3.1	3.3	2.0	3.2	2.8	2.7	3.1	2.7	2.6	3.4	2.6	2.9
Academic matters	2.7	2.7	1.6	2.5	2.6	2.1	2.6	1.8	2.0	2.4	2.2	2.4
Work placement matters (if applicable)	2.2	3.2	1.0	3.2	2.3	3.6	3.0	4.2	1.7	2.2	2.6	2.7
Information on the host country univ.	2.8	2.9	1.8	2.4	2.8	3.3	2.7	2.1	2.0	2.6	2.5	2.6
Language training	2.7	2.7	1.5	2.2	2.8	2.9	2.8	3.0	2.6	3.8	2.7	2.7
The host country in general	2.9	2.6	1.7	2.8	2.9	3.3	2.7	2.3	2.4	2.9	2.7	2.7
The local community	2.6	2.6	1.4	2.9	2.9	3.7	2.6	2.4	2.4	3.1	2.8	2.8
Personal matters	2.8	2.7	2.3	3.1	3.0	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.3	3.3	2.5	2.7
Social contacts with host country nationals	2.8	2.1	1.7	2.6	2.9	2.2	2.8	2.3	3.3	3.1	2.6	2.6
Cultural, sports, recreational activities	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.7	2.3	2.3	3.0	1.0	2.3	3.2	2.0	2.3
(n)	(21)	(37)	(6)	(37)	(60)	(6)	(22)	(17)	(7)	(6)	(91)	(310)

Question 4.2: To what extent were you provided with assistance/guidance/advice concerning your ECTS study period abroad, by your home university prior to the study period abroad and by your host university? And to what extent were you satisfied with the assistance/ guidance/ advice provided?
* On a scale from 1 = "very high" to 5 = "very low"

Satisfaction with assistance by the home institution of higher education differed - in some respects substantially - according to the country of the home institution, as Table 3.12 indicates. Belgian ECTS students were most satisfied, while Spanish students were least satisfied with the assistance provided by their home institutions. Respective differences according to the field of study were relatively small.

As regards assistance and advice provided by the host institution of higher education, ECTS students spending their study period abroad in Denmark, Ireland, and the Netherlands were most satisfied and those going to Portugal least satisfied. One should bear in mind, however, that the number of ECTS students going to these countries was relatively small.

Altogether, ECTS students viewed both preparation for the study abroad period and assistance concerning the study abroad period provided by their home institution with some caution. They had a somewhat more positive view about the assistance provided by the host institution. The difference between the performance of the home and host institutions as assessed by ECTS students were rather more marked than those recorded by ICP students a year earlier; in addition, a much smaller proportion of ECTS students prepared intensively for the study period abroad. These findings suggest that, in particular, provisions and assistance by the home institutions in those respects ought to be improved.

4

Life and Study Abroad

4.1 Cultural and Social Activities in the Host Country

Learning about the host country culture and society and experiencing the host country directly is obviously essential in order to cope with life and study in other countries, to serve one's own social and cultural needs in the host country and to enrich knowledge and competencies required in a future in which traditional boundaries disappear or lose their importance. ECTS students in 1989/90 undertook a wide range of activities abroad in order to broaden their experience. Around 72 percent often had conversations with host country students, 65 percent with other host country nationals and 64 percent had often contacts with host country teaching staff. Listening and reading newspapers was an activity frequently undertaken by 79 percent of students and visiting museums and attending concerts by 67 percent of the respondents; 66 percent often experienced joint leisure activities with host country nationals, as Table 4.1 shows. In all categories, ECTS students reported that they took part in activities on a regular basis, 3 to 10 percent more often than ICP students in 1988/89 had.

Contact with teaching staff was more frequent, the longer the students stayed abroad. Frequent contacts were reported by 42 percent of the few ECTS students staying at most three months abroad, by 60 percent staying abroad up to half a year, and by 68 percent who stayed in the host country longer than half a year. In contrast, ICP students in 1988/89 who stayed abroad for relatively long periods reported less frequent contact with teaching staff - a finding suggesting that contact tended to be common during the first weeks only. Academic staff involved in ECTS programmes, though, seem to have contacts with their students more regularly over the whole period. The

specific nature of ECTS programmes might explain this finding. Issues of credit award and credit transfer might require more frequent interaction between students and staff than those generally required in ICPs.

ECTS students spending their study period abroad in Denmark, Greece, and the United Kingdom most frequently had contacts with host country academic staff, while those going to France, Belgium and Italy reported less frequent contacts of that kind. As regards communication outside institutions of higher education, Greece (100 %) and Ireland (88 %) seemed to provide the best and the Netherlands the least opportunities.

Table 4.1
Experiences and Activities Abroad, by Host Country (percent*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Contact with teaching staff of host country	55	58	86	62	38	86	55	71	67	75	82	64
Discuss./conv. with students of host country	50	68	100	87	68	86	73	88	67	88	68	72
Discuss./conv. with other people of host country	55	69	71	79	53	100	73	88	44	63	61	65
Listening to/reading news about host country	57	76	71	87	77	86	73	82	78	100	82	79
Travelling in host country	59	59	43	47	48	71	68	88	67	63	57	57
Visiting museums, attending concerts etc.	71	65	86	74	62	86	86	76	44	75	60	67
Joint leisure activities with host country nationals	50	70	57	79	52	86	86	100	67	63	61	66

Question 4.1: Please state the frequency of the following experiences and activities during your ECTS study period abroad:
* Percent responding either "1" or "2" on a scale from 1 = "very often" to 5 = "not at all"

More students enrolled in business administration than in other fields participated in joint leisure activities with host country nationals (77 %) and travelled in the host country (72 %), as Table 4.2 shows. Activities such as visiting museums, attending concerts etc. were most frequently reported by students in history (81 %) and business administration (72 %).

Table 4.2
Experiences and Activities Abroad, by Field of Study (percent*)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Contact with teaching staff of host country	64	70	73	61	57	64
Discuss./conv. with students of host country	76	79	75	72	59	72
Discuss./conv. with other people of host country	59	54	71	76	67	65
Listening to/reading news about host country	73	84	78	82	79	79
Travelling in host country	72	51	39	60	55	57
Visiting museums, attending concerts etc	72	81	61	64	55	67
Joint leisure activities with host country nationals	77	58	69	63	60	66

Question 4.1: Please state the frequency of the following experiences and activities during your ECTS study period abroad:
* Percent responding "1" or "2" on a scale from 1 = "very often" to 5 = "not at all"

4.2 Accommodation in the Host Country

More than half of the students supported by the ECTS programme were provided with university accommodation (halls of residence furnished by the institutions of higher education or other agencies in charge of accommodation of students) during the study period at the host institution of higher education. As Table 4.3 shows, about one fifth of the students lived in an apartment or

house abroad which they shared with other students. Seven percent rented a room in a private home during their study period abroad.

The proportion of ECTS students provided with university accommodation varied considerably according to the host country. About three quarters of the students going to the Federal Republic of Germany (76 %) and about two-thirds of those going to the Netherlands (67 %), the United Kingdom, and Belgium (64 % each) lived in halls of residence as well as more than half of the students who spent their study period abroad in Italy, Greece, Denmark, and France. On the other hand, few students going to Ireland (29 %) and Spain (21 %) lived in university halls of residence; instead, living in apartments or houses together with other students was most common for these students (59 and 54 % respectively).

Table 4.3
Accommodation During Study Period at Host Institution, by Host Country
(percent)

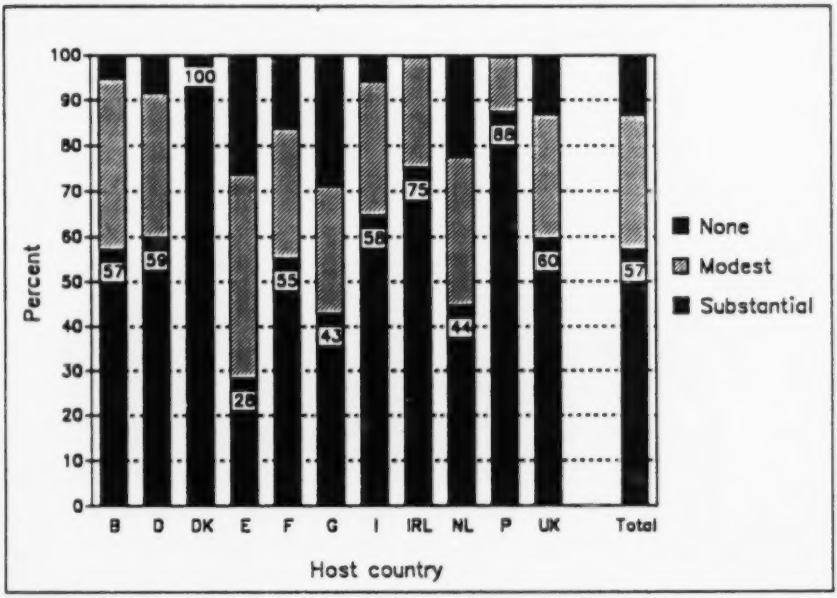
	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
University accommodation	64	76	57	21	55	57	59	29	67	38	64	55
Own apartment	0	5	0	8	8	0	5	0	0	0	3	4
Apartment together with other students	18	8	29	54	17	43	5	59	11	25	16	22
Apartment with parents/relatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Apartment with partner	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Room in private home	5	0	14	13	9	0	0	6	11	38	6	7
Hotel/pension/ boarding house	9	5	0	3	2	0	32	0	0	0	1	4
Other	0	3	0	0	6	0	0	6	11	0	3	3
Different types of accommodation	5	3	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(22)	(37)	(7)	(39)	(64)	(7)	(22)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(105)	(337)

Question 6.1: Where did you live most of the time during your studies at your home university and during the study period abroad?

It should be added that many more students going to Italy lived in hotels or pensions (32 %) than students going to other countries. On average, the ECTS students' types of accommodation during their study period abroad were similar to those of the ICP students surveyed one year earlier.

The majority of ECTS students (66 %) stayed in the same place for the whole study period abroad, 21 percent moved once, and 13 percent twice or even more often. On average, students changed their place of living 0.6 times during their study period abroad. This is slightly less than was the case for the ICP students surveyed one year earlier (0.7 times), though ECTS students spent on average a longer period abroad. 64 percent of the ECTS students participating in work placement abroad had to change accommodation, because the location of the work placement was far away from the host institution of higher education.

Chart 4.1
Assistance and Advice Provided by the Host Institution on Accomodation
(percent)



Question 4.2: To what extent were you provided with assistance/guidance/advice concerning your ECTS study period abroad, by your home university prior to the study period abroad and by your host university?

Table 4.4
Role of Host Institution Staff and Students in Finding Accommodation for Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (percent)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Staff - Regular accommodation	64	59	86	32	56	29	85	29	67	50	54	54
Students - Regular accommodation	5	3	0	3	5	14	0	6	0	0	4	4
Staff and Students - Regular accommodation	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	11	0	2	2
Staff - Temporary accommodation	5	5	0	19	3	0	0	12	0	0	10	7
Students - Temporary accommodation	0	3	0	3	2	14	0	6	0	0	1	2
Staff and Students - Temporary accommodation	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Staff - Assistance	5	19	14	8	8	14	0	18	0	25	11	10
Students - Assistance	0	0	0	5	0	14	0	0	0	0	3	2
Staff and Students - Assistance	0	0	0	0	3	0	5	6	0	0	1	2
No support	9	0	0	8	5	14	5	6	11	0	6	5
Own arrangements	14	8	0	22	17	0	5	12	11	25	9	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(22)	(37)	(7)	(37)	(63)	(7)	(20)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(102)	(329)

Question 6.3: What role did the host university staff and students play in finding your accommodation?

ECTS students were asked what kind of assistance and advice they were given by the host institution on accommodation (see Chart 4.1) and how satisfied they were with the assistance provided: 57 percent rated the extent of assistance and advice as "substantial" and 30 percent as "modest", while 13 percent reported no assistance in this respect. Asked in more detail about the role staff as well as students of the host institution of higher education played in finding accommodation, ECTS students reported almost the same amount of help from their respective host institution as the ICP students did when surveyed one year earlier. As Table 4.4 shows, 60 percent of the ECTS stu-

dents were provided with regular accommodation and 9 percent were provided with temporary accommodation: 14 percent had at least received assistance in their own search for accommodation, and only 3 percent (as compared to 11 percent of the 1988/89 ICP students) stated that they had no support regarding accommodation. Finally, 12 percent had their own accommodation arrangement and had therefore informed the institution that they did not need any support.

Students of the host institution of higher education played a more modest role in finding accommodation for the incoming ECTS students than did host students for the ICP students in 1988/89. Students found regular accommodation for 4 percent and temporary accommodation for 2 percent of the incoming ECTS students. A further 6 percent of students reported other kinds of help by the host institution students: for example, finding accommodation in cooperation with the host institution staff, assisting the incoming students in their own search or doing the latter in co-operation with host institution staff.

Only 56 percent of the ECTS students could move directly into a regular room or other kind of accommodation upon arrival: 44 percent had to spend a waiting time, lasting up to one week for 29 percent, up to one month for a further 14 percent, and more than one month for 2 percent of the students. In this respect, ECTS students did not experience a more favourable situation than ICP students of the preceding year. ECTS students going to Greece had the longest waiting time on average (9.4 days), followed by the students who spent their study period abroad in Spain (8.0 days). The shortest waiting periods on average were reported by students studying in Denmark, Italy, and Belgium (up to one day on average).

Almost half of the ECTS students did not face problems in the search for accommodation. As Table 4.5 indicates, problems most often encountered were: expensive accommodation (reported by 24 % of the students), scarcity of accommodation (23 %), and poor quality of available accommodation (15 %). Again, the experiences of ECTS students were similar to those of the ICP students of the preceding year. A further 12 percent of ECTS students stated that most of the accommodation available was too far away from the university or too inconveniently located in general. Few students faced difficulties because owners, landlords, etc. did not like students (3 %), because of their nationality, religion or colour (2 %) or their sex (1 %).

ECTS students were asked to assess the quality of the accommodation in the host country and to compare it with the quality of their accommodation during their study at their home institution. Altogether, students were not dissatisfied with their accommodation in the host country (see Table 4.6). On average, they rated 2.5 on a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = "very bad". This was a slightly better result than that for the ICP students of the preceding year

(2.6). ECTS students considered accommodation abroad, however, still clearly worse than accommodation at home which was rated 1.8 on average (also 1.8 in the case of the ICP students of the preceding year). Actually, 20 percent of the ECTS students rated their accommodation abroad as bad (scale points 4 and 5), but only 5 percent did so regarding accommodation at home.

Table 4.5
Problems Encountered in Search for Accommodation, by Host Country
(percent)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Did not know where and how to look	14	22	0	21	11	14	0	6	11	38	12	13
Had language difficulties	5	11	0	26	8	0	5	6	0	38	5	9
Accommodation was scarce	18	35	0	33	14	43	14	24	33	38	23	23
Quality of acc. available was mostly poor	14	3	0	26	20	43	9	24	11	13	12	15
Acc. available too far from univ., inconv. located	18	0	0	18	14	29	14	6	0	13	12	12
Accommodation was expensive	27	11	0	33	15	29	23	35	44	13	28	24
Too busy studying etc.	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	7	4
Some owners/ landlords etc. do not like students	0	3	0	8	3	14	9	0	0	0	2	3
Difficulties because of length of ECTS period	9	0	0	18	8	0	9	0	0	0	3	6
Difficulties because of nationality/ religion/race	0	3	0	10	2	14	0	0	0	0	1	2
Difficulties because of sex	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other	0	19	14	5	12	0	5	6	11	25	16	12
Not ticked	68	54	86	26	55	57	59	41	44	0	49	49
Total	177	165	100	226	163	243	145	159	156	175	170	172
(n)	(22)	(37)	(7)	(39)	(65)	(7)	(22)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(105)	(338)

Question 6.5: What problems did you face in the search for accommodation? (multiple reply possible)

Two host countries clearly stood out in quality of accommodation provided, as Table 4.6 shows. ECTS students studying in Denmark rated housing provided on average by far the most positively (1.4), followed by students going to Germany (2.1). Students going to these two countries rated the quality of accommodation slightly better than the quality of accommodation they had in their respective home countries (1.7 and 2.2 respectively). The average rating of accommodation was the lowest for students studying for some period in Greece (4.0), France (3.1), and Belgium (2.9). In comparison, ICP students 1988/89 had also rated accommodation in Denmark and Germany most positively, while accommodation in France had been viewed least favourably.

Table 4.6
Quality of Accommodation in Host Country and in Home Country (mean*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
In host country (by host country of students)	2.9	2.1	1.4	2.5	3.1	4.0	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.5
	(22)	(37)	(7)	(39)	(65)	(7)	(20)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(105)	(336)
In home country (by host country of students)	1.6	2.2	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.6	2.4	1.8	1.8
	(22)	(37)	(7)	(38)	(65)	(7)	(19)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(104)	(333)
In home country (by home country of students)	1.5	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.8	2.3	1.8
	(24)	(69)	(13)	(55)	(46)	(18)	(32)	(12)	(21)	(14)	(30)	(334)

Question 6.7: How would you, in general, describe the quality of your accommodation in the host country and in your home country?
* On a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = "very bad"

One important element of the quality of accommodation is short commuting time between the institution of higher education and the place where students lived. On average, ECTS students spent 30 minutes daily travelling to the institution of higher education and back. Only 8 percent spent more than one hour commuting.

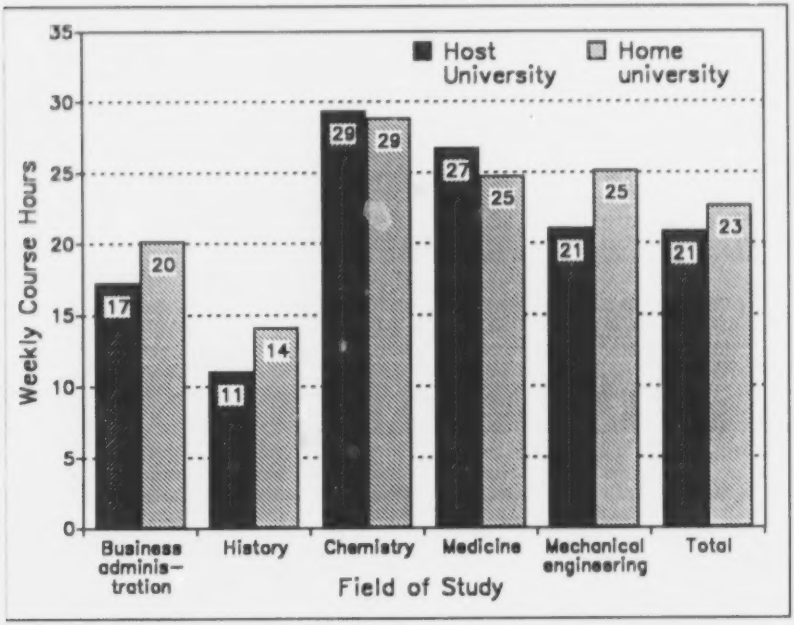
Accommodation plays some role with regards to interaction and communication with host country students or with other host country nationals. Around 65 percent of the ECTS students reported that they frequently (responses 1 or 2 on a scale from 1 = "frequently" to 5 = "not at all") talked about culture and

society with people living in the same accommodation, and 62 percent often found these people helpful for support and advice in practical matters, while accommodation was less instrumental for discussion or cooperation regarding academic matters (58 %). Altogether ECTS students rated the impact of accommodation on communication during the study period abroad more important than had ICP students of the preceding year.

4.3 Study at the Host University

ECTS students in 1989/90 took a weekly average of 20.9 hours of courses (including laboratory work, etc.) abroad. The weekly course hour load was on average 1.8 hours (8 %) less than that taken at the home institution of higher education (22.7 hours).

Chart 4.2
Weekly Course Hours at Host and Home Institution, by Field of Study
(percent)



In comparison, ICP students in 1988/89 (the comparison group) had taken 3.0 hours less abroad than at home (20.4 and 23.4 hours respectively). The number of hours taken abroad by ECTS students varied markedly by field of study, as Chart 4.2 shows: from 11.1 hours in history to 29.4 hours in chemistry. Students in medicine and chemistry took more course hours abroad than at home, while those in other fields took significantly less course hours abroad.

The total work load, including practical projects, foreign language learning, independent study, work on thesis, field trips etc., of ECTS students while abroad was on average 44 hours per week. This was the same level of work load as that of the ICP comparison group in 1988/89. As Table 4.7 shows, 10 hours were devoted by ECTS students to independent study, about 6 hours to practical projects, 3 hours to work on thesis and 2 hours each to field trips and foreign language training. Students enrolled in chemistry and medicine spent a substantial proportion of their time on practical projects (17 and 10 hours).

Table 4.7
Weekly Hours Spent on Study During Academic Study Period Abroad, by Field of Study (mean)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Courses & course-related activities	20.9	18.1	15.1	21.1	19.3	19.3
Practical projects, laboratory work etc.	2.6	1.6	16.9	9.7	4.5	6.3
Independent study	9.9	11.9	8.0	9.5	9.7	9.9
Work on thesis	1.5	4.8	3.3	.4	4.7	2.8
Field trips, study-related excursions, observations	2.5	2.0	.9	1.2	1.8	1.8
Language training	2.2	1.9	1.3	1.3	2.5	1.9
Other study activities	1.0	1.3	.6	4.9	1.9	1.9
Total hours per week spend on study activities	40.7	41.8	46.3	48.2	44.5	43.9
(n)	(91)	(56)	(49)	(62)	(71)	(329)

Question 4.3: How many hours per week did you spend on average on the following types of study? Please estimate for the ECTS academic study period only (i.e. excluding work placement and holiday periods).

Most students used the opportunity of studying at an institution of higher education of another EC country to participate in courses complementing those offered at the home institution. More than two-thirds of the ECTS students took courses involving content not available (or of lesser quality) at the home institution. About a half experienced new teaching methods while one third utilized laboratories or other facilities not available (or of lesser quality) at the home institution. In addition, 43 percent took courses to broaden their academic and cultural horizon which were not required and not directly linked to their area of specialization. About half of the students took courses in the host country language and 14 percent courses in other languages. About a fifth of the students reported that they developed a new area of specialization, and 7 percent changed their earlier chosen specialization. Altogether, these findings are similar to those reported by students participating in Joint Study Programmes in the mid-eighties and the ICP students in 1988/89. As Table 4.8 shows, differences in those respects by field of study are lower than one might have expected. Only ECTS students enrolled in medicine took significantly less courses involving content not available at home, and only chemistry students took fewer courses to broaden their academic and cultural background.

The language of instruction was the host country language for 84 percent of the ECTS students (76 % for the ICP comparison group 1988/89). As Table 4.9 shows, the host country language was least often the language of instruction for students going to Greece (14 %) and the Netherlands (33 %): notably, in these two countries English was frequently used as the language of instruction for incoming ECTS students. The longer the study period in the host country lasted, the more likely it became that courses would be taught in the host country language: 58 percent of the few ECTS students going abroad for at most three months reported that the host country language was the language of instruction. If the period abroad was 4-6 months, 80 percent of the students were taught in the host country language in comparison to 87 percent of those going abroad for more than six months.

Table 4.8
Type of Academic Enhancement During Study Period Abroad, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Take courses involving content/topics not available at home university	68	89	80	39	70	68
Take courses involving teaching methods not practiced at home university	62	61	43	69	40	55
Utilize labs. or other (e.g. comp. data anal.)	34	19	49	37	45	37
Take courses to broaden academic & cultural background	42	63	25	43	42	43
Develop a new area of specialization	15	30	24	12	26	21
Change an earlier chosen specialization	9	7	10	6	5	7
Take language courses in the host country language	51	54	45	36	58	49
Take language courses in other language	34	7	8	6	4	14
Not ticked	4	2	0	7	3	4
Total	319	333	284	255	293	298
(n)	(91)	(57)	(51)	(67)	(73)	(339)

Question 4.5: During your ECTS study period abroad, did you: (multiple reply possible)

Table 4.9
Language of Instruction* During Study Period Abroad, by Host Country
(percent)

Language	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Host	59	92	57	82	80	14	95	94	33	100	95	84
Home	14	0	0	3	3	0	0	6	0	0	5	4
Host + home	5	0	0	0	8	14	0	0	11	0	0	2
Host + other	23	5	0	10	8	0	5	0	56	0	0	7
Host + home + other	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	3	43	5	0	71	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(22)	(37)	(7)	(39)	(65)	(7)	(22)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(102)	(335)

Question 4.6: What was the language of instruction in the courses you took at the host university? If you were taught in more than one language, please state percentages.
* "Home" was coded if host country language and country of home university language were identical.

Regarding various aspects of teaching and learning, ECTS students noted substantial differences between education at their home and their host institution. Looking at the data by country, the differences perceived ranged from at least 1.0 on average to at most 1.8 on the five-point-scale (1 = "strongly emphasized" to 5 = "not at all emphasized"). Largest differences between the home and host institutions were perceived as regards the emphasis placed on oral examinations (1.8), using publications in foreign languages (1.7), out-of-class communication between teachers and students (1.6) and freedom to choose specific areas of study (1.5). The perceptions of ECTS students in 1989/90 and ICP students in 1988/89 regarding differences between higher education at the home and host institution of higher education were quite similar. A comparison of Table 4.10 and 4.11 shows the main direction of differences which students from the various EC countries experienced abroad.

For example, Germany was viewed by ECTS host students as a country in which the students' freedom and independence was strongly emphasized (see Table 4.12). Students had a high degree of freedom in choosing courses and areas and were expected to work independently. Little emphasis was placed on regular class attendance while understanding theories, concepts and paradigms was highly appreciated. Assessment through written examinations or papers submitted seemed to dominate.

Institutions of higher education in France, according to the ECTS students going there, placed high emphasis on teachers as the main source of inform-

ation. Students' freedom of choice and autonomy and out-of-class communication between teachers and students were not considered important. Emphasis on independent work was relatively low, and written examinations played a more important role in assessment than in most other EC Member States. In contrast to ICP students in 1988/89, ECTS students in 1989/90 did not observe a strong emphasis in France on regular class attendance, though otherwise there was close agreement in their separate descriptions of teaching and learning at French institutions of higher education.

Table 4.10
Features of Academic Learning Climate at Host Institution, by Country of Home Institution (mean*)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Acquiring facts	2.6	1.8	2.2	3.1	2.1	2.8	2.2	3.3	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.3
Understanding theories, concepts, paradigms	2.0	2.8	2.8	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.6	1.8	2.9	2.0	2.0	2.4
Providing comparative perspectives	3.1	3.3	3.6	2.4	3.1	2.3	2.8	2.2	2.9	3.3	3.0	2.9
Using publications in foreign languages	3.2	3.5	4.8	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.8	3.1	3.7	3.9	2.7	3.3
Regular class attendance	2.7	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.7	1.9	1.5	2.3	3.3	1.9	2.7	2.3
Teachers as the main source of information	3.0	1.8	2.0	2.6	3.0	2.6	2.0	2.6	2.7	2.1	2.7	2.4
Freedom to choose specific areas of study	2.6	3.6	3.8	2.3	2.9	2.4	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.1	2.9	2.9
Out-of class commun. between students & teachers	2.3	2.7	3.8	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.3	3.1	3.4	2.7	3.3	2.7
Independent work	2.0	3.1	3.5	1.9	1.7	2.6	2.8	3.8	1.9	2.6	2.1	2.4
Oral examinations	3.3	3.0	3.6	2.8	2.8	2.5	4.1	3.7	2.7	3.3	2.8	3.1
Written examinations	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.1	1.8	2.3	1.2	2.1	1.7	1.5	1.9	1.9
Evaluation of papers submitted	2.5	3.5	2.3	2.1	2.5	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.8	1.8	2.6	2.6
(n)	(20)	(64)	(12)	(54)	(44)	(16)	(26)	(9)	(17)	(13)	(25)	(300)

Question 4.8: If you have taken regular courses at the host university together with host country students: According to your experience, to what extent are each of the following emphasized at your host institution, as compared with your home institution?
* On a scale from 1 = "strongly emphasized" to 5 = "not at all emphasized"

Table 4.11
Features of Academic Learning Climate at Home Institution, by Country of Home Institution (mean*)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Acquiring facts	1.7	2.3	3.3	1.9	2.2	2.5	1.8	2.7	2.0	1.9	2.8	2.2
Understanding theories, concepts, paradigms	1.8	2.0	1.7	1.8	2.1	2.3	1.2	1.7	2.1	1.6	2.2	1.9
Providing comparative perspectives	2.9	3.2	3.1	3.2	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.2	2.4	3.4	2.9	2.9
Using publications in foreign languages	2.4	2.7	1.5	3.3	3.2	2.4	2.5	3.2	2.4	2.1	3.4	2.8
Regular class attendance	3.7	3.2	3.3	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7	3.2	2.4	2.2	2.9
Teachers as the main source of information	2.5	2.8	3.5	2.2	2.6	2.4	2.4	3.1	2.7	2.7	3.0	2.6
Freedom to choose specific areas of study	4.0	2.3	2.6	3.8	3.2	3.2	2.3	2.3	3.8	3.6	3.1	3.1
Out-of class commun. between students & teachers	4.0	3.7	2.6	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.3	2.9	2.4	3.3
Independent work	2.3	1.9	2.3	1.7	2.1	2.8	3.2	2.1	2.2	2.7	2.0	2.2
Oral examinations	1.8	3.0	2.8	4.0	3.1	3.6	1.1	4.1	3.1	2.7	3.6	3.0
Written examinations	2.3	2.0	2.0	1.4	1.4	1.2	3.2	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.8
Evaluation of papers submitted	2.9	3.6	2.5	3.4	2.1	3.1	3.1	2.0	3.1	2.0	1.9	2.9
(n)	(21)	(63)	(13)	(54)	(44)	(16)	(27)	(9)	(17)	(13)	(24)	(301)

Question 4.8: If you have taken regular courses at the host university together with host country students: According to your experience, to what extent are each of the following emphasized at your host institution, as compared with your home institution?
* On a scale from 1 = "strongly emphasized" to 5 = "not at all emphasized"

Institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom were characterized, both according to the incoming ECTS students in 1989/90 and the ICP students of the preceding year, by a strong emphasis on out-of-class communication between teaching staff and students, by a relatively important role for evaluation of papers submitted, and by little use of publications in foreign

languages. ECTS students from other countries, in addition, felt that British institutions of higher education put relatively little emphasis on acquiring facts while putting more emphasis on regular class attendance than European institutions of higher education on average.

Table 4.12
Features of Academic Learning Climate at Host Institution, by Host Country (mean*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Acquiring facts	2.3	2.6	3.0	1.6	2.1	3.0	1.7	2.1	2.7	1.6	2.8	2.3
Understanding theories, concepts, paradigms	2.4	2.1	2.2	2.8	2.5	3.2	1.9	2.4	1.9	2.7	2.5	2.4
Providing comparative perspectives	3.2	2.9	2.9	3.4	3.0	2.8	3.1	1.8	1.8	3.3	2.9	2.9
Using publications in foreign languages	2.2	3.1	1.3	3.6	3.3	3.5	2.6	3.5	1.4	1.4	4.1	3.3
Regular class attendance	2.3	2.9	2.6	2.5	2.5	1.3	3.1	1.8	2.4	1.9	1.9	2.3
Teachers as the main source of information	2.3	3.0	4.3	2.1	1.9	1.7	2.6	2.3	2.9	1.6	2.7	2.4
Freedom to choose specific areas of study	3.1	2.2	2.6	3.5	3.7	3.2	2.4	2.2	2.9	4.1	2.6	2.9
Out-of class commun. between students & teachers	3.0	2.9	2.1	2.8	3.6	2.3	3.3	1.7	2.5	3.3	2.1	2.7
Independent work	2.6	1.9	2.4	2.7	2.7	3.2	2.3	2.0	2.0	3.1	2.2	2.4
Oral examinations	1.4	2.8	3.4	3.9	3.0	3.8	1.4	3.4	1.7	2.9	3.5	3.1
Written examinations	2.5	2.0	2.7	1.3	1.6	1.7	3.5	1.2	2.1	1.3	1.8	1.9
Evaluation of papers submitted	2.7	2.4	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.3	3.4	1.9	3.0	3.6	2.2	2.6
(n)	(18)	(30)	(7)	(37)	(59)	(6)	(21)	(15)	(8)	(7)	(91)	(299)

Question 4.8: If you have taken regular courses at the host university together with host country students: According to your experience, to what extent are each of the following emphasized at your host institution, as compared with your home institution?
* On a scale from 1 = "strongly emphasized" to 5 = "not at all emphasized"

As regards a few other countries, the views of ECTS students and ICP students of the preceding year seem to differ markedly at first glance, but this might, in most cases, be a random effect due to small numbers. The findings, altogether, underscore the variety of higher education systems in the European Community.

4.4 Problems Faced During the Study Period Abroad

Difficulties and problems faced abroad may reduce students' academic progress and personal development. In order to examine the extent to which problems occurred and what major problems ECTS students faced, they were presented with a list of 20 possible problems. Three quarters of ECTS students reported that they faced problems during their study period abroad:

- 50 percent mentioned problems in organizing living and study conditions in the host country (accommodation, finance etc.);
- 49 percent, problems of study;
- 23 percent, foreign language problems;
- 19 percent, issues regarding social contacts; and
- about 5 percent mentioned problems regarding the lifestyle of nationals of the host country or climate, food, health etc.

Matters of credits and credit transfer were most frequently named as serious problems (25 %). Given the nature of the ECTS scheme, this finding could indicate serious problems but we cannot exclude, however, the interpretation that students' expectations regarding these matters were especially high and thus more easily led to critical assessment. Notably students in business administration (45 %) reported problems regarding credit transfer. As Table 4.13 shows, ECTS students who spent their period abroad in Spain, France, Greece, or Italy stated that they had problems with the differences of teaching and learning methods between the host and the home institutions. Guidance concerning academic matters was considered most problematic by ECTS students going to Germany or Greece.

Around 17 percent of ECTS students faced significant problems in taking examinations in a foreign language while 12 percent had problems with their language of instruction. Notably, 9 percent missed a readiness on the part of the teachers to meet and help foreign students. Only 7 percent of ECTS students experienced serious problems because the academic level of courses was too high, and only 7 percent considered class size a serious problem.

In general, British and Portuguese students stated more often that they experienced academic problems abroad than ECTS students from other coun-

tries. We should bear in mind that the perception of academic problems might be caused by divergent factors, for example inadequate provisions abroad on the part of the host institution, by poor preparation of the students going abroad or by a high level of expectation on the part of the students, possibly formed by study conditions at home.

In this context, it is worth pointing out that about twice as many students spending more than half a year abroad reported problems compared with those going abroad for a shorter period. The types of problems were:

- differences in teaching and learning styles between the host and the home institution;
- finding little readiness on the part of the host institution teachers to meet and help foreign students;
- finding a place to concentrate on studies outside class; and
- financial matters.

Also taking examinations in a foreign language was more often viewed as a serious problem by those staying abroad for more than half a year than by those abroad for a shorter period. One could certainly infer that certain conditions began to pose more serious problems, once a long period of study led to a real immersion in the academic life at the host institution.

Two further differences according to field of study are noteworthy. Students enrolled in chemistry experienced least problems on guidance on both academic and non-academic matters. Problems faced in taking courses in a foreign language were stated twice as often by history students as by students enrolled in other fields of study.

Concerning living and organizing conditions of study abroad, problems of accommodation were experienced by 21 percent of the ECTS students. Problems regarding administrative matters were reported by 18 percent, among them most often those studying for some period in Italy (40 %), Portugal (38 %), and Germany (27 %). No administrative problems were experienced by students going to Denmark or Ireland. These findings are similar to those noted by ICP students in 1988/89. Finally, financial problems were stated by 15 percent of the ECTS students.

Table 4.13
Problems During Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (percent*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Matters of credit transfer	25	36	0	17	21	60	26	29	14	17	25	25
Taking courses in a foreign language	5	19	14	5	23	0	10	6	22	25	8	12
Taking examinations in a foreign language	6	32	14	8	26	33	20	13	25	0	11	17
Too high academic level of courses	10	6	0	5	12	0	15	0	11	0	6	7
Differences in teaching/learning betw. home & host institution	14	22	0	39	30	50	33	18	0	13	14	22
Readiness of teachers to meet/help foreign students	10	11	0	10	18	33	20	0	0	13	1	9
Differences in class or student project group size	0	11	0	14	13	0	10	6	0	0	1	7
Administrative matters	24	27	0	24	24	17	40	0	11	38	7	18
Financial matters	14	8	14	28	14	17	24	24	33	25	8	15
Guidance concerning academic programme	24	34	14	21	24	33	20	0	11	0	15	19
Guidance concerning non-academic matters	19	5	14	5	21	0	0	0	11	13	2	8
Finding place to concentrate on studies outside class	10	8	0	10	11	17	35	12	0	0	5	9
Accommodation	24	22	0	36	18	50	20	0	13	0	21	21
Climate, food, health etc.	0	0	0	8	10	17	5	0	0	0	7	5
Lifestyles of nationals in host country	5	0	14	5	10	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Interaction among/ with host country students	15	8	14	3	11	0	10	0	11	13	8	8

(to be cont.)

(Table 4.13 cont.)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Not enough contact with people from your own country	0	0	0	3	13	0	0	0	11	0	2	4
Too much contact with people from your own country	5	14	0	13	8	17	15	13	0	13	12	11
Communicating in foreign language outside the class	0	0	14	5	6	0	5	6	11	0	3	4
Not enough time available for travel	10	14	29	16	13	0	15	24	11	0	11	13

Question 8.2: To what extent did you have significant problems in any of the following areas during your study period abroad?
* Percent responding 1 or 2 on a scale from 1 = "very serious problems" to 5 = "no problems at all"

Altogether ECTS students in 1989/90 mentioned academic problems more often than had ICP students in the preceding year. In contrast, a smaller proportion of ECTS students had administrative and financial problems. Problems of having too much contact with home country nationals, most frequently stated by ICP students, were hardly felt at all by ECTS students.

4.5 Integration into the Academic and Social Life of Students at the Host Institution

Altogether, ECTS students succeeded in getting integrated into the academic and social life of the host country. As Table 4.14 shows, their average ratings were 2.3 regarding both aspects on a scale from 1 = "to a great extent" to 5 = "not at all". The ratings were somewhat more positive than those for ICP students in 1988/89 (2.5 each). Academic and social integration was felt to be most successful by the ECTS students spending a study period in Spain, Ireland or Portugal. Students going to Denmark felt well integrated into the academic life, but to a much lesser extent into the social life. Conversely, ECTS students studying in Germany and Greece felt socially well integrated

there, but to a lesser extent academically. Finally, students going to Belgium and the Netherlands felt least integrated both academically and socially.

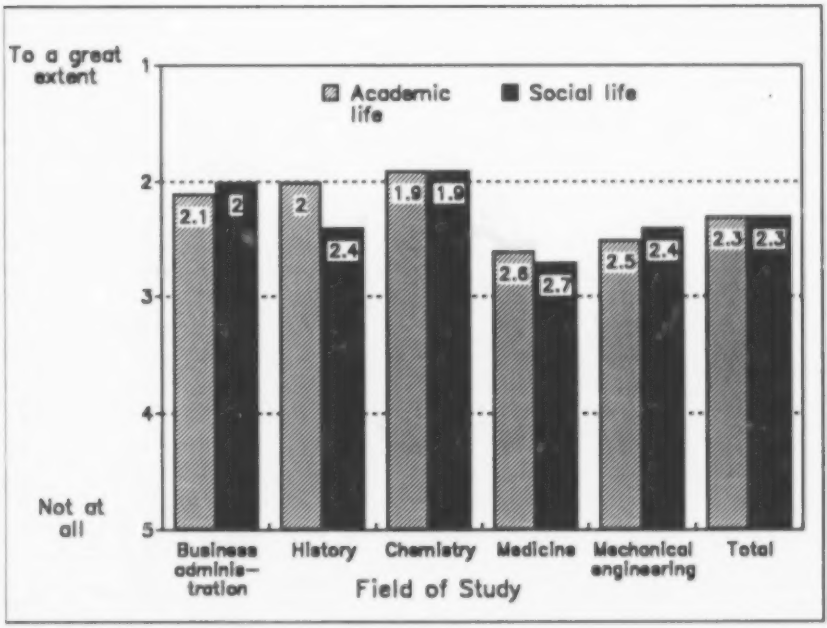
Table 4.14
Integration into Academic and Social Life of Students Abroad, by Host Country (mean*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Academic life	2.6	2.6	1.3	1.9	2.4	2.3	2.5	1.5	2.7	2.1	2.2	2.3
Social life of students	3.0	2.1	2.4	2.1	2.6	1.7	2.0	1.6	2.6	2.1	2.3	2.3
(n)	(22)	(36)	(7)	(39)	(64)	(6)	(20)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(105)	(333)

Question 8.7: To what extent did you feel integrated into the academic and social life of students at your host university?
* On a scale from 1 = "to a great extent" to 5 = "not at all"

As Chart 4.3 shows, integration into academic as well as social life seemed to work well with students enrolled in chemistry (1.9 each) and business administration (2.1 and 2.0), while students enrolled in history emphasized only academic integration (2.0 and 2.4). Students enrolled in mechanical engineering (2.5 and 2.4) and medicine (2.6 and 2.7) felt integrated to a lesser extent.

Chart 4.3
Integration into Academic and Social Life in the Host Country, by Field of Study (mean*)



Question 8.7: To what extent did you feel integrated into the academic and social life of students at your host university?
* On a scale from 1 = "to a great extent" to 5 = "not at all"

5

Costs and Financing of the Study Period Abroad

5.1 Monthly Expenses Abroad and at Home

This overview on costs and financing is based on the responses of ECTS students included in this survey who provided complete information on their sources of finance and expenses both while studying at home and abroad. This was done by 67 percent of all respondents.

ECTS students spent, while studying abroad in 1989/90, on average 526 ECU per month. The expenses abroad included:

- 441 ECU for living expenses;
- 32 ECU for travelling from and to the host country;
- 23 ECU for continued expenses at home; and
- 30 ECU for tuition and fees.

As Table 5.1 shows, ECTS students going to Denmark spent the highest amount on living expenses (508 ECU per month), closely followed by those going to the United Kingdom (499 ECU), the Netherlands (496 ECU), and Spain (488 ECU). On the other hand, ECTS students going to Portugal spent least (312 ECU), while students going to Greece (345 ECU), France (370 ECU), and Germany (376 ECU) spent less than average. The same distribution of monthly expenditure was true for ICP students in 1988/89 with those going to Denmark spending most and those going to Portugal least.

At home, ECTS students spent 342 ECU per month, consisting of 313 ECU for living expenses and 29 ECU for tuition and fees.

Monthly living expenses while studying at home (prior to the ECTS study period abroad) varied from 466 ECU for students in Denmark to 181 ECU in Spain, as Table 5.2 shows. Notably, expenses for accommodation (value esti-

mated, if the students lived at home) varied greatly - from 168 ECU in Denmark to 44 ECU in Spain.

ECTS students were explicitly asked whether they had continuing essential costs to cover at home while studying abroad. On average, 23 ECU per month was spent on continuing costs at home mostly for accommodation kept at home, corroborating information already provided by students in workshops. Comparing this figure with full accommodation costs while studying at home (102 ECU) suggests that about one fifth of the ECTS students kept their accommodation at home while studying abroad.

Around 11 percent of ECTS students reported that they paid tuition and fees abroad, but these expenses were only 1.3 ECU per month higher than those paid at home. The level of tuition fees varied markedly according to field of study: those enrolled in business administration paid more than 50 ECU per month both at home and abroad, while those enrolled in other fields paid half this amount or even less both at home and abroad.

The additional monthly costs abroad were on average 184 ECU for all ECTS students. This figure includes costs for return travel to the host country, continuous costs at home while abroad as well as the differences between living expenses and tuition and fees between study abroad and at home.

Highest additional costs per month were reported by Portuguese (430 ECU), Spanish (331 ECU), and Greek students (315 ECU). They notably spent substantially more on accommodation and on food, clothes etc. abroad than at home. On the other hand, British (46 ECU) and French ECTS students (90 ECU) had less than 100 ECU per month additional costs abroad. In contrast to students from other countries, British ECTS students had on average clearly cheaper accommodation abroad than at home, and French had slightly less costs for food, clothes etc. abroad than at home (also Danish students had slightly less costs abroad on both items).

During the study period abroad, 36.7 percent of the costs incurred by ECTS students were covered by the ERASMUS grant, as Table 5.3 shows. This ratio does not differ substantially from the one reported by the ICP students in the preceding year (35.2 %).

5.2 Resources of Funding Study Abroad and at Home

Parents and relatives covered on average 38.0 percent of the ECTS students' expenses for their study abroad and 64.4 percent of their study expenses at home, as a comparison of the data presented in Tables 5.3 and 5.4 shows. This clearly is a higher proportion than in the case of the parents of ICP students in the preceding year (31.6 and 56.0 %). As already stated in chapter 3, ECTS

students seem to be on average from higher socio-economic background than ERASMUS (ICP) students are in general. We estimate that parents and relatives spent 27 ECU per month less on average for the students while studying abroad than while studying at home (193 ECU as compared to 220). Also ICP students in 1988/89 had reported that their parents and relatives had to contribute slightly less when they were studying abroad than when at their home institution. One has to bear in mind, though, that expenses at home might include indirect costs, notably for accommodation.

Home country grants and loans covered 20.3 percent of ECTS students costs on average while studying at home and 12.0 percent of the costs abroad (as compared to 27.4 % and 17.5 % on average for ICP students in 1988/89). We estimate that home country grants and loans during the study period abroad were slightly lower than during study at the home institution (63 ECU as compared to 69 ECU per month).

Nine out of ten ECTS students were awarded an ECTS grant which covered on average 36 percent of the expenses abroad (similar to the ICP students of the preceding year). At least half of the expenses abroad were covered by an ECTS grant for students from Ireland (59 %), Portugal (52 %) and Denmark (51 %) while the respective proportions were about one quarter in the case of German and French students. For the other host countries, the proportions of expenses covered by ECTS grants were similar.

Table 5.1
Monthly Expenditures During the Study Period Abroad*, by Host Country (in ECU, mean)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Books and other study-related supplies	41.9	19.8	41.2	34.1	22.8	26.8	29.0	43.5	33.8	29.7	25.2	28.0
Accommodation	136.8	102.1	150.9	187.4	114.0	136.8	120.2	135.8	197.2	74.0	181.0	146.5
Travel to university	13.3	16.3	37.3	16.9	11.1	4.3	11.5	13.2	5.2	5.4	7.0	11.5
Other travel	48.1	36.6	29.9	52.7	36.7	39.2	53.7	94.9	13.5	39.0	68.8	51.8
Food, common house-hold, clothes, hygiene etc.	202.5	165.4	205.4	145.9	162.0	115.2	150.0	171.6	226.0	138.7	193.3	173.4
Other expenses	31.9	35.2	42.8	50.6	23.4	22.7	57.4	10.8	20.2	25.1	24.1	30.0
Total	474.5	375.5	507.6	487.6	370.0	345.0	421.8	469.7	495.9	311.9	499.4	441.1
(n)	(11)	(26)	(6)	(24)	(45)	(6)	(13)	(12)	(8)	(7)	(68)	(226)

Question 5.3: Apart from tuition fees and related expenses: How much, on average, did you spend per month during term time during your ECTS study period abroad and while studying at home? Please state the amount in the currency of the country of your home university.
* Excluding expenses in home country while being abroad, tuition and fees and excluding return travel.

Table 5.2
Monthly Expenditures While Studying at Home, by Country of Home Institution (in ECU, mean*)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Books and other study-related supplies	26.3	31.0	54.7	28.0	15.4	23.7	49.9	29.7	61.5	47.0	21.0	32.3
Accommodation	89.1	118.3	167.7	43.6	130.9	58.6	100.5	88.2	92.7	19.2	144.1	102.3
Travel to university	21.9	25.3	3.4	12.0	12.4	10.7	11.5	12.6	20.3	6.3	14.6	15.6
Other travel	17.4	31.1	20.5	25.5	35.0	24.0	29.1	15.2	20.6	32.3	21.2	26.6
Food, common house-hold, clothes, hygiene etc.	122.5	131.9	184.6	48.9	166.4	97.8	110.6	64.0	117.6	83.1	102.4	116.4
Other expenses	9.6	19.9	35.1	23.1	21.0	9.3	21.0	29.0	18.6	6.8	24.2	20.1
Total	286.7	357.5	466.0	181.1	381.2	224.1	322.7	238.7	331.2	194.7	327.4	313.3
(n)	(17)	(47)	(11)	(26)	(33)	(12)	(22)	(9)	(15)	(10)	(24)	(226)

Question 5.3: Apart from tuition fees and related expenses: How much, on average, did you spend per month during term time during your ECTS study period abroad and while studying at home? Please state the amount in the currency of the country of your home university.
* Excluding expenses in home country while being abroad, tuition and fees and excluding return travel.

Table 5.3
Financing of Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (percent, mean)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
ERASMUS grant	41.5	27.1	52.9	34.8	30.5	50.3	38.0	52.8	33.2	46.8	39.3	36.7
Other European Community programme grant	.0	1.1	.0	.4	1.5	.0	.0	6.1	.0	.0	.0	.7
Home country grant/scholarship	4.4	.6	37.5	7.9	5.5	.0	.7	3.3	41.1	2.7	17.2	8.9
Home country loan	4.7	6.1	2.3	1.0	6.1	.0	.0	.0	3.3	2.5	.3	3.1
Host country grant/scholarship	.0	.2	.5	1.4	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	1.5	3.3	.6
Support by work placement or employer	1.9	.0	.0	1.9	.9	.0	.0	2.8	1.3	.0	3.5	1.1
Other type of support abroad	.0	.0	.0	1.2	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.1
Other grants	.0	1.7	.0	1.0	2.3	.0	.0	.0	1.3	.0	1.1	1.0
Parents, relatives	34.9	49.6	1.5	42.7	44.8	38.8	57.0	22.8	10.8	38.0	24.9	38.0
Own money (work, savings)	8.4	13.6	1.6	8.3	7.0	11.0	3.0	12.2	6.0	1.0	10.5	8.4
Other	4.1	.0	.0	1.3	.0	.0	1.6	.0	.3	.0	.0	.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(17)	(47)	(11)	(26)	(33)	(12)	(22)	(9)	(15)	(10)	(24)	(226)

Question 5.1: How have you financed your study at your home university up to now, and how did you finance your ECTS study period abroad (including travel and tuition fees if any)? Please estimate percentages (including possibly value of free current etc.). If applicable, state the name of the support scheme or of the supporting agency.

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Table 5.4
Financing of Study at Home Institution, by Country of Home Institution (percent, mean)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Other European Community programme grant	.0	.0	8.2	.0	.5	.0	.0	3.3	.0	.0	.0	.6
Home country grant/scholarship	10.4	1.9	43.7	8.5	9.7	.0	3.9	12.2	52.0	13.0	43.0	15.2
Home country loan	5.2	11.5	10.8	.0	7.4	.0	.0	.0	6.3	5.0	.4	5.1
Support by work placement employer	.0	.0	.0	.4	2.6	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.8	.5
Other grants	.0	2.1	.0	.0	2.3	.0	1.1	.0	.0	.0	.6	1.0
Parents, relatives	65.2	63.9	1.1	85.1	68.6	90.0	88.5	59.8	32.5	78.0	46.4	64.4
Own money (work, savings)	13.9	20.5	29.8	4.0	7.1	10.0	6.1	24.7	7.5	8.0	8.8	12.0
Other	5.3	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.5	.0	1.7	.0	.0	.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(17)	(47)	(11)	(26)	(33)	(12)	(22)	(9)	(15)	(10)	(24)	(226)

Question 5.1: How have you financed your study at your home university up to now, and how did you finance your ECTS study period abroad (including travel and tuition fees if any)? Please estimate percentages (including possibly value of free current etc.). If applicable, state the name of the support scheme or of the supporting agency.

5.3 Ratio of Supplementary Grant to Additional Costs

Based on the ECTS students' statement of the percentage of costs abroad covered by the ERASMUS grant, we estimate that they were awarded 193 ECU per month, i.e. slightly more than all the additional costs abroad (184 ECU). ICP students in 1988/89 had reported higher living costs at home (355 ECU) than ECTS students in 1989/90 and lower living costs abroad (419 ECU). According to the same way of calculation, we estimate that the ICP students surveyed in 1988/89 had received 158 ECU per month on average, i.e. 35 ECU less than ECTS students in 1989/89, but that this amount had, on average, also covered all additional costs abroad.

This does not mean, however, that ECTS students from all countries were awarded a ERASMUS grant sufficient to cover all supplementary costs. Table 5.5 compares the additional costs for studying abroad to the grants received. While Danish and British ECTS students seem to have been awarded a grant which was on average clearly higher than their additional expenses abroad (including travel and continuing expenses at home while being abroad), the grants obviously were not sufficient on average for Spanish and Portuguese students.

Table 5.5
Additional Monthly Costs Abroad and ERASMUS Grant, by Country of Home Institution (in ECU, mean)

Country of home institution	Costs at home	Costs abroad	Additional costs	Grant	Grant minus add. costs
Belgium	313	550	237	228	-7
Germany	361	519	158	141	-17
Denmark	470	584	114	309	195
Spain	220	551	331	192	-139
France	447	537	90	164	74
Greece	224	539	315	272	-43
Italy	347	487	140	185	45
Ireland	293	454	161	240	79
Netherlands	424	619	195	206	11
Portugal	205	643	438	301	-137
United Kingdom	338	404	46	159	113
Total	342	526	184	193	9

As Table 5.6 shows, ECTS students in chemistry had less additional costs abroad than students from other fields of study. Notably, they spent less for continuing costs at home as well as for travel in the host country. ECTS history students received the highest ERASMUS grant on average. Thus, both chemistry and history students had on average less additional costs abroad than covered by the ERASMUS grant.

Table 5.6
Additional Monthly Costs Abroad and ERASMUS Grant, by Field of Study
(in ECU, mean)

Field of study	Costs at home	Costs abroad	Additional costs	Grant	Grant minus add. costs
Business administration	356	554	198	184	-14
History	323	528	205	251	46
Chemistry	320	455	135	209	74
Medicine	347	539	192	166	-26
Mech. engineering	348	525	177	175	-2

5.4 Financial Problems Abroad

Around 15 percent of ECTS students reported serious financial problems related to their study abroad compared with 21 percents of ICP students in the preceding year. This difference is not surprising, because ECTS students in 1988/89 had received a higher grant on average than ICP students in the preceding year and ECTS students' parents on average seem to be in better financial situation than those of ICP students are in general.

Serious financial problems were notably stated by Portuguese (43 %), French (26 %), and Irish students (25 %), while no Danish student reported such problems. These differences by home country do not closely match those regarding the sufficiency or insufficiency of the grant in covering additional costs abroad.

Altogether, the information provided by the ECTS students suggests that on average the ERASMUS grant is slightly higher than the costs incurred abroad. This does not exclude, however, financial problems, because some students received a lesser grant as compared to their additional costs abroad. In addition, the figures reported do not tell how many students had to choose thriftier living conditions abroad and how many students did not participate in the ECTS programme because they considered the financial support too small.

6

The Formal Mechanisms of the ECTS System

6.1 Expected Procedures

The ECTS pilot scheme was inaugurated in 1989/90 in order to improve the award of academic recognition through the development of a system of credits and credit transfer. Participating departments are expected to calculate academic achievements at all stages of a course programme in terms of 60 credits a year (30 per semester, or 20 per term), to provide outgoing students, i.e. those moving to another institution of higher education, any necessary documentation of credits hitherto awarded, and to accept all credits previously awarded by institutions participating in the ECTS scheme to incoming students. In addition, departments participating in the ECTS scheme are expected to support students' mobility in the same way as those in Inter-University Cooperation Programmes are expected to do, i.e. in the case of a sending department to help students academically and administratively prepare for a study period abroad, and in the case of a receiving department to provide access to courses and to ease their life and study abroad through various means of academic, administrative, and possibly social advice and support.

In relation to the mobile students, the home and the host departments have to undertake the following activities in order to comply with the formal mechanisms of the ECTS programme:

- the home institution has to calculate previous achievements on the basis of 60 credits annually;
- the home institution has to provide the student, or directly the host institution, a transcript of records on credits awarded prior to the study period abroad;

- the host institution has to provide an "information package" informing the students from the partner institutions, via the coordinators in the respective departments, about the structure of the study course, titles of the courses, and academic time units (trimester, semester, year or any larger unit), the credit value of the course as well as the type (lecture, seminar, laboratory practical, etc.) and the content of the individual courses. This should enable students to select the courses to be taken abroad prior to the sojourn;
- the host institution has to recognise prior study and, if necessary, to adapt the achievements stated by the home institution on a transcript of records to its own system of calculating credits;
- upon completion of the study period abroad, the host institution has to provide the student - or directly the institution the student returns to (or newly go to) - a transcript of records about his or her academic achievements during the study period abroad (again calculated on the basis of 60 credits annually for successfully completed study); and
- the institution the student returns to (or newly selects) has to accept the credits previously awarded and might have to transform the credits awarded for the study period abroad into its own credit system.

6.2 Transition from the Home to the Host Institution

Only 38 percent of ECTS students were awarded ECTS credits for their achievements at the home institution of higher education prior to the study period abroad: 9 percent were awarded credits according to other schemes, while 54 percent of the students reported that their prior achievements were not calculated in the form of credits. As Table 6.1 shows, the achievements of students enrolled in medicine were least often calculated in terms of ECTS credits.

Table 6.1
Credits Awarded for Achievements at Home Institution, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Credit in ECTS terms	41	48	42	19	40	38
Credit in other terms	6	0	8	23	6	9
No Credit	53	52	50	58	54	54
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(85)	(52)	(48)	(62)	(67)	(314)

Question 7.1: Did you receive credits for your achievements at the home university (i.e. the university you were enrolled prior to the ECTS study period abroad)?

Almost all Danish students reported that prior achievement was calculated in ECTS credits. The same holds true for about half of the Portuguese and Spanish students, as Table 6.2 shows. Only one out of seven German students stated that they received ECTS credits for their achievements at the home institution of higher education.

Table 6.2
Credits Awarded for Achievements at Home Institution, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Credit in ECTS terms	42	16	82	53	40	31	41	25	35	54	41	38
Credit in other terms	8	9	9	9	5	13	0	8	5	23	15	9
No Credit	50	75	9	38	56	56	59	67	60	23	44	54
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(24)	(68)	(11)	(53)	(43)	(16)	(27)	(12)	(20)	(13)	(27)	(314)

Question 7.1: Did you receive credits for your achievements at the home university (i.e. the university you were enrolled prior to the ECTS study period abroad)?

Only 31 percent of the ECTS students reported that a written statement was provided about their achievements before they went abroad. Only 9 percent received a written statement reporting ECTS credits, while in 5 percent of the cases other ways of calculating credits were employed: 38 percent of students reported that they did not receive any written statement, while 31 percent did not know whether the host institution had received a written statement, in some cases because home departments had sent these directly to their host partner departments. As Table 6.3 shows, the proportion of ECTS students provided with such a written statement did not differ substantially according to field of study. What differed, though, as Table 6.4 shows, was the way the information was provided. Not a single student enrolled in medicine reported that the written statement provided information on prior achievements at the home institution in terms of ECTS credits.

Table 6.3
Provision of Written Statement on the Achievements by the Home Institution, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Yes	38	31	32	25	27	31
No	38	33	30	49	39	38
Do not know	24	37	38	25	33	31
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(84)	(52)	(50)	(59)	(66)	(311)

Question 7.3: Did your home university provide a written statement on your achievements prior to your study abroad?

Table 6.4
Provision of the Written Statement on the Achievements by the Home Institution in Terms of Credits, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Yes, 60 credits	30	31	33	0	33	28
Yes, in other way	7	31	25	20	11	16
No	63	38	42	80	56	57
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(30)	(13)	(12)	(10)	(18)	(83)

Question 7.4: If Yes, were your prior achievements stated in terms of credits?

About half of the Greek and Spanish students reported that they were provided with a written statement on their achievements prior to their study period abroad, while few students from other countries received such a statement, as Table 6.5 shows. The proportion of those receiving a written statement in terms of ECTS credits was one out of seven or eight among Italian, Belgian, and Spanish students and even lower among students from all other countries (none of Danish, Dutch and Portuguese students).

Table 6.5
Provision of Written Statement on the Achievements by the Home Institution, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Yes	30	27	17	48	23	56	36	18	24	29	21	31
No	13	56	50	37	28	25	32	64	71	29	18	38
Do not know	57	17	33	15	49	19	32	18	5	43	61	31
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(23)	(63)	(12)	(52)	(43)	(16)	(28)	(11)	(21)	(14)	(28)	(311)

Question 7.3: Did your home university provide a written statement on your achievements prior to your study abroad?

6.3 Course Selection

ECTS students in 1989/90 were not explicitly asked whether they had selected the courses they finally took abroad prior to going to the host institution, but from statements to other questions, we know that about half of the students opted for courses only when already at the host institution. We estimate that one in five courses were selected when the students were already abroad.

Around 12 percent of the ECTS students reported that they were not admitted to courses at the host institution they originally had selected. The number of courses they were not admitted to amounted to 1.6 on average, as Table 6.6 shows. Most courses could not be taken simply because they were found not to be available on arrival at the host institution.

Table 6.6
Number of Courses Originally Selected but not Being Admitted to or not Taken at the Host Institution, by Field of Study (mean)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Not admitted to	1.5	2.0	1.0	1.2	1.9	1.6
(n)	(15)	(6)	(3)	(5)	(11)	(40)
Not taken	2.0	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.9	1.7
(n)	(26)	(11)	(9)	(26)	(29)	(101)

Question 2.8.2.b: Did you originally select courses prior to your study abroad which you actually did not take?

30 percent of the students did not take courses originally selected (1.7 on average), mostly for operational reasons, such as timetable overlap with other courses, courses starting before the student's arrival at the host institution, etc. Other important reasons for change were that the course content did not meet prior expectations or new preferences for courses had emerged in conjunction with the perceived need to reduce the number of courses to be studied at the host institution in general. Academic and linguistic reasons played a marginal role in decisions not to take courses as originally intended.

Table 6.7
Reasons for Taking Courses at the Host Institution Originally not Envisaged, by Field of Study (percent of students taking courses not envisaged)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Fulfilled prerequisites for additional courses	18	3	14	7	16	13
Substitute for courses not admitted to	18	21	10	7	27	18
Substitute for courses dropped	23	18	5	21	18	19
Expectation: courses academically easier	23	3	5	14	9	13
Expectation: courses with less language problems	8	9	10	11	14	10
Expectation: course academically more demanding	13	9	19	25	20	17
Courses with preferable teaching-style	28	9	14	21	9	18
Courses operationally advantageous	28	9	14	32	43	27
Expectation: courses fit well into specialization	35	21	29	29	32	30
Interesting themes	52	45	52	54	50	51
Expectation: alternative to study provisions at home	35	27	33	14	36	31
Recommendation of coordinator at host univ.	23	6	14	0	23	16
Other reasons	22	27	38	29	36	29
Total	328	209	257	264	334	291
(n)	(60)	(33)	(21)	(28)	(44)	(186)

Question 2.8.4: If you took courses at the host university you did not intend to take at the beginning of your stay there, please state reasons (multiple reply possible).

More than half of the ECTS students (55 %) took courses at the host institution which, originally, they did not intend to take while abroad. This was true for 66 percent of students enrolled in business administration, 60 percent in mechanical engineering, and 58 percent in history, but only 42 percent of those enrolled in medicine and 41 percent in history. Courses initially not envisaged were taken mostly for positive reasons, as Table 6.7 shows:

- 51 percent of the students taking courses initially not envisaged did so because of interesting themes;
- about 60 percent believed that the courses were an interesting alternative to the study provisions at the home institution (e.g. no similar courses offered at home, or specially related to the host country), or that they fitted well into the respective area of specialization (30 % each);
- a considerable number of students selected new courses not originally planned for operational reasons, e.g. because they fitted well into the study period abroad or because of the timing of the course provision.

60 percent of the ECTS students took courses abroad which were academically less demanding than the courses they would have been expected to take at their home institution. Altogether, 30.7 percent of the courses taken abroad by ECTS students were rated as less demanding; 14 percent of the students stated that more than half of the courses taken abroad were less demanding, and 12 percent stated that all the courses were less demanding.

Around 9.8 percent of all courses taken abroad were considered as a repetition of work already covered in previous courses with 7.2 percent of them rated as appropriate to earlier years of study. A further 13.7 percent of the courses were considered less demanding for other reasons. As Table 6.8 shows, ECTS students enrolled in medicine took far fewer courses which were considered less demanding than students enrolled in other fields of study.

Table 6.8
Proportion of Less Demanding Courses Taken at the Host Institution and Reasons for Considering Them as Less Demanding Courses, by Field of Study (mean of percentages stated by all students)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Reason: Repetition	12.9	11.8	9.3	5.9	8.2	9.8
Reason: Courses appropriate to earlier year of study	10.0	10.6	6.2	4.0	4.6	7.2
Reason: Courses less demanding otherwise	10.5	13.3	12.9	8.6	23.2	13.7
Proportion of academically less demanding courses	33.5	35.7	28.4	18.5	36.1	30.7
(n)	(91)	(57)	(51)	(67)	(73)	(339)

Question 8.1: What percentage of courses you took abroad were academically less demanding than courses you would have taken at the home university? If (some of) the courses were less demanding, please indicate why you consider them to have been less demanding.

By host country, the ratio of less demanding courses taken varied from 9 percent to 54 percent. Students spending their period of study in Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Ireland found the fewest number of courses less demanding, as Table 6.9 shows. On the other hand, 53.6 percent of the courses taken by students spending the period of study in Greece and 43.2 percent of the courses taken in the United Kingdom were felt to be less demanding. The latter finding is most noteworthy, because the United Kingdom is by far the most popular host country, hosting no less than 31 percent of all ECTS students surveyed.

Table 6.9
Proportion of Less Demanding Courses Taken at the Host Institution and Reasons for Considering Them as Less Demanding Courses, by Host Country (mean of percentages stated by all students)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Reason: Repetition	7.5	7.3	2.9	7.8	10.3	12.9	11.7	6.9	5.0	9.9	12.3	9.8
Reason: Courses appropriate to earlier year of study	1.8	9.2	1.4	3.7	6.5	7.9	.0	7.1	6.7	.0	11.8	7.2
Reason: Courses less demanding otherwise	4.3	9.1	4.3	12.4	11.5	32.9	23.0	2.9	2.2	16.6	19.2	13.7
Proportion of academically less demanding courses	13.6	25.6	8.6	24.0	28.3	53.6	34.6	16.9	13.9	26.5	43.2	30.7
(n)	(22)	(37)	(7)	(39)	(65)	(7)	(22)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(105)	(338)

Question 8.1: What percentage of courses you took abroad were academically less demanding than courses you would have taken at the home university? If (some of) the courses were less demanding, please indicate why you consider them to have been less demanding.

The percentage of students taking less demanding courses varied to a lesser extent according to the home country of the students than according to the host country. In the case of seven out of the 11 home countries, the respective ratio ranged between 29 and 35 percent. Only Italian ECTS students stated that they took a much larger proportion of less demanding courses (45.4 % of courses on average), while Portuguese (14.7 % of courses), Belgian (19.3 % of courses) and British students (23.2 % of courses) considered relatively few courses as less demanding. In the case of the Italian students we have to bear in mind that about half of them studied during their period abroad in the United Kingdom, where the proportion of courses considered as less demanding was relatively high.

6.4 Procedures upon Completion of the Study Period Abroad

Upon completion of the study period abroad, 56 percent of the ECTS students in 1989/90 received a transcript stating credits awarded: 29 percent received another type of written statement, while 15 percent did not receive any

statement at all. Although the number of students receiving accreditation on the bases of ECTS credits and transcripts was much higher for the study period abroad than for their prior achievements at the home institution, the formal procedure has proved to be still far off the target of providing a transcript in terms of ECTS credits to all ECTS students.

The proportion of students provided with an transcript in which achievement during the study abroad period were listed in terms of ECTS credits did not vary substantially by field of study. It ranged from 63 percent in history to 53 percent in business administration. As Table 6.10, however, indicates, less than half of the students spending their period abroad in Greece, Portugal, Germany and France were provided with an ECTS transcript of records upon completion of their study period abroad.

Table 6.10
Crediting of Achievements at Host Institution, by Host Country (percent)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Credits received and transcript-stated	68	44	67	66	49	33	55	56	100	38	59	56
Credits received but not stated	26	26	17	20	39	33	30	25	0	25	30	29
No credits received	5	29	17	14	12	33	15	19	0	38	11	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(19)	(34)	(6)	(35)	(57)	(6)	(20)	(16)	(6)	(8)	(102)	(309)

Question 7.7: Did you receive credits for your achievements at the ECTS host university (i.e. the university you were enrolled at during the ECTS study period abroad)?

If we compare the practice of providing a transcript of records in the various Member States, we find out that the respective provisions for both home and host students were less than average in Germany and Greece. In contrast, in Belgium, Denmark, Spain and United Kingdom, the provision of transcripts of records - for the incoming as well as for the outgoing students - was higher than the EC average.

6.5 Problems Students Face Regarding Credit Transfer

As discussed in Chapter 4, students were asked to state to what extent they had significant problems with regard to various aspects of their study period abroad. Matters of credit transfer were most often named as a significant problem by the ECTS students. For example, 25 percent reported serious problems (1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very serious" to 5 = "no problems at all") and most notably, 45 percent of students in business administration faced problems of credit transfer.

The formal procedures of setting up systems based on credits and credit transfer were obviously implemented only partially as regards the first cohort of ECTS students. In Chapter 7, we will examine the extent to which this was an impediment to actual credit transfer.

7

Credit Transfer, Recognition, and Academic Impacts

7.1 Credits Awarded by Home and Host Institution

As already mentioned in Chapter 6, only 38 percent of students participating in the ECTS programme in 1989/90 were awarded credits in ECTS terms for their achievement at the home institution of higher education prior to the study period abroad. 9 percent were awarded credits on another basis, i.e. according to national credit schemes or specific schemes of the respective institution while 54 percent were not awarded credits at all. Clearly, in the initial year of the ECTS programme, many participating institutions had not yet introduced a calculation of prior achievements according to the ECTS credit scheme.

Of those students who were awarded credits according to the ECTS scheme (38 %), 84 percent earned 60 credits or more per year. On average, 57.4 credits were awarded. The average annual number of credits was 59 in mechanical engineering and in history, 58 in business administration, but only 54 in chemistry and 53 in medicine.

About three quarters of the ECTS students responded to the question on whether their prior achievements were implicitly or explicitly accepted by the host institution of higher education. Among them, 85 percent stated that all their prior achievements were accepted, as Table 7.1 shows. In 4 percent of the cases, however, prior achievements were not accepted at all. On average, 91 percent of prior achievements were accepted: 97 percent in medicine, 94 percent in mechanical engineering, and 93 percent in business administration as compared to 86 percent in chemistry, and 81 percent in history. Irish (71 %) and British students (75 %) reported less often than those from other countries that their prior achievements were accepted. This ratio of acceptance by

the host institutions of higher education differed less according to the host country than according to the home country.

The extent to which prior achievements at the home institution were accepted by the host institution did not depend on the home institution's ways of calculating those prior achievements (in ECTS credit terms, other credit terms or not according to credits).

Table 7.1
Percentage of Accepted Achievements by the Host Institution, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
0 %	2	10	11	0	4	4
1 - 99 %	14	19	6	6	5	10
100 %	85	71	83	94	91	85
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(66)	(42)	(35)	(47)	(57)	(247)

Question 7.5: How many of your prior achievements were implicitly or explicitly accepted by the host university, in terms of placement in courses at the host university?

Table 7.2
Credits for Courses Taken at the Host Institution, by Field of Study (mean)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Originally allocated	44.2	52.9	42.4	45.9	51.6	47.4
Actually awarded	41.4	46.3	37.7	45.0	47.0	43.4
(n)	(74)	(45)	(39)	(29)	(52)	(239)

Question 2.8.2.a: Please list all the courses you actually took at the host university.

In response to a question about all the courses taken abroad, 70 percent of the ECTS students indicated the number of credits originally allocated and subsequently awarded. A further 20 percent of the students listed courses but did not give information about the number of credits the courses were related to. We assume that they did not know whether the courses were credited or not. The 70 percent of ECTS students who were able to calculate their courses in terms of ECTS credits reported that they were awarded, on average, 43.4 credits for their study in the host country, as Table 7.2 indicates. This corresponds to 92 percent of the course load of 47.4 credits originally allocated (98 percent in medicine, 94 percent in business administration, 91 percent in mechanical engineering, 89 percent in chemistry and 88 percent in history). Conversely, we note that only 8 percent of the credits assigned to the courses the students took were not ultimately achieved.

In a further question, ECTS students were asked to state the total number of credits actually awarded by the host institution as well as the period of study these referred to. This made it possible to calculate the average number of credits granted to students responding to this question, compared to the norm of 60 ECTS credits per year. As Table 7.3 indicates, 18 percent of the ECTS students were awarded more than 60 credits and 59 percent exactly 60 credits; 24 percent were awarded less than 60 credits, among them 3 percent less than 30 credits. The average amount of credits received was 59.6, i.e. 99 percent of the ECTS norm of 60 per year. It was 66 in mechanical engineering, 59 in business administration, 57 in chemistry, and 56 each in medicine and history. We have to bear in mind that calculations about the amount of credits received were based on the statements of about half of the ECTS students in 1989/90. The other half of the students were excluded from the calculation for various reasons. About 15 percent explicitly declared that they did not receive credits from the host institution. A further 33 percent did not provide the information needed for the calculation of the normalized amount of credits received. We assume that the respective figures would be less favourable if we had fuller information.

Table 7.3
Number of Credits Received at Host Institution, Calculated per Year in ECTS Terms, by Field of Study (percent of students being awarded credits in ECTS terms)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Less than 30	2	3	3	6	2	3
Less than 60	21	21	23	25	19	21
60	55	65	63	56	56	59
More than 60	23	12	10	13	23	18
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(53)	(34)	(30)	(16)	(43)	(176)

Question 7.8: If yes, please state the number of credits you received.

7.2 Degree of Credit Transfer, Correspondence of Achievements and Prolongation

As Table 7.4 shows, 84 percent of the ECTS students answering the respective question (68 % of all students) stated that all of the credits awarded abroad were transferred (or were likely to be transferred) to the institution of higher education they were enrolled in the subsequent year, i.e. in most cases the home institution of higher education: the credits thus transferred were accepted (or likely to be accepted) by that institution. The average number of credits transferred corresponds to 95 percent of the credits awarded by the host institution of higher education. All credits were transferred in chemistry, while 5 percent each in history and mechanical engineering, and 7 percent each in business administration and medicine were not transferred.

Table 7.4
Credit Transfer from Host Institution to Students' Current Institution, by Field of Study (percent of students who received credits for their achievements at the host institution)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Credits transferred	75	86	82	52	85	77
Probable acceptance of credits	19	21	3	14	9	14
Do not know	21	5	15	38	11	17
Total	115	112	100	103	106	109
(n)	(73)	(43)	(33)	(29)	(53)	(231)
Ratio of credits transferred or likely to be transferred	92.5	95.1	100.0	92.5	94.8	94.7
(n)	(58)	(40)	(26)	(15)	(45)	(184)

Question 7.9: Upon completion of your ECTS study period abroad, how many of the credits mentioned in response to question 7.8 were transferred to (accepted by) the university in which you are currently enrolled?

The ratio of 95 percent credit transfer is impressive in comparison to "degree of recognition" in the case of the ICP students in 1988/89 (81 % for the ICP comparison group and 77 % for all ICP students). One has to bear in mind, however, that only 59 percent of the ECTS students had responded to the relevant questions (67 % of the ICP students), notably those whose achievements were calculated in ECTS credits. It seems likely that those not being awarded credits in ECTS terms for their study achievement abroad had a lower degree of recognition upon return, and thus that the figure of 95 percent may be an over-estimate.

As Table 7.5 indicates, 62 percent of ECTS students who responded to the relevant question (53 % of all ECTS students) stated that the total number of credits transferred corresponded to the number of credits typically granted or to the amount of typical study in a corresponding period at the institution in which they were enrolled prior to the ECTS study period abroad. On average, the number of credits granted abroad corresponds to 86 percent of that typically expected in a corresponding period at home: 93 percent in medicine, 89 percent in chemistry, 88 percent in mechanical engineering, 83 percent in business administration, and 80 percent in history.

Table 7.5
Correspondence of the Number of Credits Granted at Host Institution to the Number of Credits Granted or the Amount of Typical Study at Institution Enrolled in Prior to Study Abroad, by Field of Study (percent of students granted credits abroad)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
0 %	0	0	0	0	2	1
1 - 49 %	11	17	12	4	7	10
50 - 99 %	30	27	15	33	27	27
100 % and more	58	57	73	63	64	62
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(53)	(30)	(26)	(27)	(45)	(181)
Correspondence of credits granted abroad to those at home	83.4	80.1	89.3	93.5	88.0	86.3
(n)	(53)	(30)	(26)	(27)	(45)	(181)

Question 7.11: To what extent do the credits granted during the ECTS period of study abroad correspond to the number of credits typically granted at the university in which you were enrolled immediately prior to the ECTS period (or to the amount of typical study, if the university in which you were previously enrolled did not normally apply a credit system)?

A 86 percent "degree of correspondence" of ECTS students' successful study abroad to study typically expected at home compares favourably with the 77 percent reported by the ICP comparison group (73 % for all ICP students in 1988/89). Again, one has to bear in mind that only about the half of the ECTS students provided corresponding information (62 percent of the ICP students), and that those not responding were likely to have lower achievements abroad.

Yet, the fact that the credits transferred after the study period abroad corresponded "only" to 86 percent of the typical amount of study requires explanation, because ECTS students had argued that the credits transferred corresponded, on average, to 95 percent of the 60 ECTS credit norm per year. We have to assume that either many home institutions of higher education expected a higher work load than the normal one, which might be counted as 60 credits per year or that the groups of students responding to the two questions had significantly different experiences on average.

Finally, 37 percent of the ECTS students stated that the study abroad period was most likely to prolong the total duration of study. The average

prolongation was 2.3 months, i.e. 29 percent of the period actually spent abroad, as Table 7.6 shows. In contrast, the respective quota was about 40 percent for the ICP comparison group (53 % for all ICP students 1988/89).

Least prolongation was expected by students in business administration (21 %) and mechanical engineering (24 %), while the expected prolongation in history and medicine (37 % each), and chemistry (32 %) was above average. For all three major measures of recognition (the ratio of transfer of credits awarded, the correspondence of study abroad to amount of study expected at home, non-prolongation), history ranked at the lower end of all fields of study incorporated into the ECTS programme.

Table 7.6
Ratio of Prolongation to the Duration of Study due to ECTS Study Period, by Field of Study (percent)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
None	72	62	57	53	66	63
Less than 50 %	5	2	11	0	3	4
50 - 74 %	7	11	9	23	17	13
100 % and more	16	26	24	23	14	20
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(75)	(47)	(46)	(60)	(64)	(292)
Ratio of prolongation to the total duration of study	20.6	37.4	31.7	36.7	23.7	29.0

Question 7.14: The ECTS study period is likely to prolong the total duration of your study by:

Prolongation was expected in particular by German (56 % of the study period abroad), Greek (46 %), and Dutch students (44 %). A substantial number of students of these countries (about 38 % each) stated that the prolongation they expected was longer than the duration of their period abroad. In the case of German and Dutch students this might be caused to some extent by the above average proportion of students who did not receive credits for their achievements at the host institution (see the subsequent section). Low levels of prolongation were reported by Belgian, Spanish, and French students. They expected only about 10 to 12 percent prolongation.

In explaining the extent of prolongation, the results discussed above are relevant since they suggest that the number of credits achieved abroad may be lower than expected at home and that some credits received abroad are not recognised. In addition, we have to point out that 31 percent of the courses taken abroad were rated as less demanding than courses the students would have taken at home (see Chapter 6). Finally, there might be cases in which the ECTS students lost some study period time in moving between the institutions. At any event, this finding suggests - in connection with the previous findings - that the participating institutions both expected on average more than 60 credits per year to be achieved (indeed almost 70 credits) and also did not seem to accept all the credits formally transferred as equivalent to those taken at home. The losses for the students involved, however, were on average much smaller than those involved on average in mobility within the ICPs.

7.3 Impact of Formal Mechanisms on Prolongation

Using the formal mechanisms of the host institutions to confirm ECTS credits gained in a written form seemed to have an impact on the credit transfer process. Those students who received a certificate received 5 percent more credits than those who were awarded credits which were not stated in a transcript. The former stated that their achievements abroad corresponded to 87 percent of the expected credits (or work load) at home, while the latter stated 83 percent. The difference was most striking, however, in regard to the expected prolongation of study:

- students whose achievements abroad were stated in a credits transcript expected on average a prolongation of study of 25 percent of the study period abroad;
- students whose achievements abroad were calculated in credits but not stated in a transcript expected 27 percent prolongation ; and
- students whose achievements abroad were not calculated in ECTS credits expected 41 percent prolongation on average.

The higher prolongation of those not receiving a ECTS certificate seems to be due in part to the fact that their achievements were lower, for they rated their academic progress 0.5 lower on a five-point scale (see the subsequent section). On the other hand, if we control the academic progress abroad statistically we still note a link between the provision of a certificate and less prolongation. Or in reverse: if institutions of higher education did not provide a certificate in ECTS terms, this contributed to a prolongation of study.

Similarly, we note a link between the home institution's calculations of prior achievements and the likelihood of prolongation. Those students whose prior achievements were not calculated by the home institution in terms of ECTS credits, eventually expected 35 percent prolongation due to their study abroad, while those whose prior achievements were calculated in ECTS credits expected only 20 percent prolongation.

7.4 Self-Rating of Academic Progress

ECTS students in 1989/90 rated their academic progress abroad more positively than academic progress during a corresponding period at the home institution. The average ratings were 2.7 on a scale from 1 = "much better" to 5 = "much less". The ratings, however, were less positive than those by the ICP students of the preceding year. Those ECTS students rating academic progress abroad negatively most often stated problems due to differences of course content and different modes of teaching, learning and assessment.

As Table 7.7 shows, ECTS students enrolled in mechanical engineering rated academic progress abroad less favourably (3.0) than students in other fields of study (about 2.6). They stated most often that academic progress at home and abroad was about the same.

Table 7.7
Academic Progress Abroad, by Field of Study (percent)*

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
1 = Much better	14	29	14	21	10	17
2	35	25	37	26	18	28
3 = Same	32	23	20	33	39	30
4	16	14	25	12	27	19
5 = Much less	2	9	4	8	6	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Academic progress abroad	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.6	3.0	2.7
(n)	(91)	(56)	(51)	(66)	(71)	(335)

Question 8.5: How would you rate your general academic progress during your ECTS study period abroad, compared with what you would have expected in a corresponding period at the university in which you were enrolled immediately prior to that period?
* On a scale from 1 = "much better" to 5 = "much less".

Academic progress abroad was rated highest by students who spent their study period abroad in Denmark (1.9), the Netherlands (1.9), and Ireland (2.2), while it was rated lowest by students going to Portugal (3.3). One should bear in mind, though, that the number of students going to these countries was very low. Thus, random effects cannot be excluded. As regards home country, Spanish, Greek, and Italian students rated academic progress abroad most highly (see Table 7.8). As already noted in regard to the responses by the ICP students, students from southern European countries seem to consider the quality of higher education abroad somewhat higher than in their home country.

It is a noteworthy finding that, according to all the criteria chosen, ECTS students were awarded recognition to a higher extent than ICP students of the preceding year, but considered their academic achievements abroad less positively. One might argue that ICP students received less recognition than they deserved because of insufficient procedures of recognition. One could also argue that ECTS students were awarded more credits than they deserved in order to comply with the formal regulations, if doubts prevailed about the quality. Finally, ECTS students might have developed a higher expectation level and therefore assessed academic progress less favourably. A regression analysis showed that academic progress was relatively closely linked to the degree of correspondence of achievements and the degree of (non-)prolongation. This does not however provide a basis for choosing between these alternative hypotheses.

Table 7.8
Academic Progress Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (percent*)

	Country of home institution											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
1 = Much better	21	10	0	32	11	28	28	8	5	21	10	17
2	17	21	38	27	33	44	38	25	19	29	34	28
3 = Same	46	34	15	34	33	6	22	42	43	21	21	30
4	8	23	46	7	22	22	9	17	29	29	21	19
5 = Much less	8	11	0	0	2	0	3	8	5	0	14	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Academic progress abroad	2.7	3.0	3.1	2.2	2.7	2.2	2.2	2.9	3.1	2.6	2.9	2.7
(n)	(24)	(70)	(13)	(56)	(46)	(18)	(32)	(12)	(21)	(14)	(29)	(335)

Question 8.5: How would you rate your general academic progress during your ECTS study period abroad, compared with what you would have expected in a corresponding period at the university in which you were enrolled immediately prior to that period?
* On a scale from 1 = "much better" to 5 = "much less".

8

Achievements and Assessment of the Study Period Abroad

8.1 Improvement of Foreign Language Proficiency

As already stated in Chapter 2, proficiency in the host country language was one of the major motives given by students in selecting their host institution. In addition, some departments provided courses not in the host country language, but in another language better known by the incoming students. Therefore, one could expect that the proficiency in the language of instruction was already relatively high prior to the study period abroad.

ECTS students were asked, after their period abroad, to rate their proficiency in the (major) language of instruction at the host institution prior to and after the study period. They were asked to rate their reading, listening, speaking, and writing proficiency in academic settings as well as outside the classroom, each on a scale from 1 = "very good" to 7 = "extremely limited". As Table 8.1 shows, students rated their prior language proficiency on average from 3.6 to 4.5, with proficiency in academic settings rated only slightly inferior to proficiency outside classroom. Prior to the period abroad, passive proficiency, i.e. reading and listening, was considered better - about half a scale point than active proficiency, i.e. speaking and writing.

Students going to Greece and Ireland rated their language proficiency prior to the study period abroad highest (3.6 on average of all eight ratings), while those going to Denmark rated it lowest. In general, we note that prior language proficiency was more highly rated the more common the language of instruction was in Europe. One has to take into account that many students spending their study period in Greece were taught in English. On the other hand, prior language proficiency did not differ substantially according to the

home country of the students, with the positive exception of Greek (3.6) and the negative exception of Irish students (4.6).

It is interesting to note that students going abroad for at most half a year were better prepared for the language of instruction than those going abroad for a longer period (see Table 8.2). Data available do not allow us to clarify to what extent this finding was influenced by institutional decisions or individual options on the part of the participating students. It might well be possible that students not very well prepared linguistically were more inclined to go abroad for a longer period hoping to compensate for their language deficiencies in the course of the year abroad.

It certainly is a surprising finding that students preparing themselves linguistically for the study period abroad rated their prior proficiency in the language of instruction abroad less favourably than those not undertaking foreign language preparation. As it is certainly not appropriate to assume that preparation led to a deterioration of proficiency, these findings may be caused by a tendency for those students whose foreign language proficiency was very low initially to undertake more language tuition than those already proficient. In addition, participation in foreign language preparation might have led to a more self-critical appraisal of the foreign language proficiency.

The study abroad period proved to be effective in raising the level of foreign language proficiency to a substantial extent. The ratings upon return were on average two points more favourable on the seven-point scale. Speaking and writing proficiency remained somewhat less highly rated than listening and reading proficiency, but improved to about the same extent. Speaking proficiency in an academic context (2.2) remained more cautiously assessed than speaking proficiency outside the classroom (1.9), as Table 8.1 shows. Language proficiency after the study period abroad varied less by host country than it did before the study period abroad. Students who spent the study period in Denmark, Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal reported a relatively large improvement in this respect.

Table 8.1
Self-rating of Competency in Language of Instruction Abroad Prior to and After Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (mean*)

		Host country											Total
		B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Reading in academic setting	prior	3.1	3.6	4.3	4.1	3.8	3.3	4.3	3.1	3.8	4.0	3.3	3.6
	after	1.5	2.0	1.6	1.5	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.8	1.4	1.7	1.7
Listening in academic setting	prior	3.8	3.8	5.3	4.4	4.2	3.9	4.5	3.7	4.1	5.3	3.7	4.1
	after	1.9	1.8	2.1	1.6	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.7	2.0	1.7	1.8
Speaking in academic setting	prior	4.2	4.3	5.3	5.0	4.5	4.1	5.0	4.2	4.8	5.4	4.2	4.5
	after	2.2	2.5	3.0	1.9	2.4	1.7	1.9	2.0	2.6	2.6	2.2	2.2
Writing in academic setting	prior	3.9	4.3	5.4	5.3	4.5	3.9	5.5	4.2	4.5	5.5	4.1	4.5
	after	2.2	2.9	2.6	2.2	2.7	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.9	2.9	2.2	2.4
Reading outside classroom	prior	3.3	3.5	4.6	3.9	3.8	3.4	4.1	3.1	3.4	4.3	3.4	3.6
	after	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.5	2.0	1.6	1.5	1.6	2.0	1.3	1.8	1.8
Listening outside classroom	prior	3.8	3.4	5.4	4.1	4.0	3.4	4.3	3.4	3.6	5.1	3.6	3.9
	after	1.9	1.8	2.1	1.5	1.8	1.1	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.8	1.7
Speaking outside classroom	prior	3.8	3.7	5.1	4.6	4.2	3.4	4.6	3.8	4.3	5.3	3.9	4.1
	after	2.1	2.0	2.4	1.7	2.0	1.1	1.5	1.7	1.9	2.3	1.8	1.9
Writing outside classroom	prior	3.6	4.2	5.1	4.9	4.2	3.6	5.2	3.7	4.4	5.4	3.8	4.2
	after	2.1	2.7	2.3	2.0	2.4	1.7	2.3	1.9	3.0	2.9	2.1	2.2

Question 4.7: How do you rate your competence in the (major) language of instruction at the host university (reply only if different from the language of instruction at your home university)?
* On a scale from 1 = "very good" to 7 = "extremely limited"

Table 8.2
Self-rating of Competency in Language of Instruction Abroad Prior to and After Study Period Abroad, by Duration of Study Period Abroad (mean*)

		Duration			Total
		3 months	4-6 months	7-12 months	
Reading in academic setting	prior	3.0	3.5	3.7	3.6
	after	1.5	1.9	1.6	1.7
Listening in academic setting	prior	3.3	3.9	4.2	4.1
	after	2.0	2.0	1.6	1.8
Speaking in academic setting	prior	3.8	4.3	4.6	4.5
	after	2.9	2.5	2.1	2.3
Writing in academic setting	prior	4.3	4.2	4.7	4.5
	after	3.1	2.6	2.3	2.5
Reading outside classroom	prior	3.0	3.3	3.8	3.6
	after	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8
Listening outside classroom	prior	3.3	3.6	4.0	3.9
	after	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.7
Speaking outside classroom	prior	3.4	3.9	4.2	4.1
	after	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.9
Writing outside classroom	prior	3.5	3.9	4.4	4.2
	after	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.3

Question 4.7: How do you rate your competence in the (major) language of instruction at the host university (reply only if different from the language of instruction at your home university)?
* On a scale from 1 = "very good" to 7 = "extremely limited"

Students spending three months abroad improved their foreign language proficiency on average 1.5 points on the seven-point scale, those going abroad six months 1.8 points, and those going abroad for 9 and more months 2.3 points. As already noted, those going abroad for a long period had rated their prior proficiency relatively low; thus, the proficiency upon return did not differ substantially according to the duration of the study period abroad.

8.2 Knowledge about the Host Country

Study in another country can also be expected to improve the knowledge of the host country. Asked to rate their knowledge on 13 aspects notably politics,

culture and society, the economic system and the geography as well as the higher education system (on a scale from 1 = "extensive knowledge" to 5 = "minimal knowledge"), ECTS students admitted to a relatively low level of knowledge of the host country prior to the study period. The ratings were similar to those of the ICP students in 1988/89.

It was surprising to note that prior knowledge about the system of higher education in the host country was second lowest, only higher than knowledge about the treatment of immigrants. ECTS students in 89/90 rated their knowledge on host country higher education slightly lower (4.0) even than ICP students in 1988/89 (3.8), although the "information packages" distributed in the framework of the ECTS system were intended to redress this information gap to some extent. Again, we cannot exclude that the students rated prior knowledge retrospectively very low, because they gained more insight on higher education than on many other areas of the host country during their study period abroad.

In general, prior knowledge of the "smaller" countries of the European Community was more limited, as Table 8.3 shows. On field of study, we note that students were better informed on those aspects of the host country closely related to their field of expertise, such as students of history on political and cultural issues or business students on the economic system of the host country.

Upon return from the study abroad period, students rated their knowledge of the host country much higher. The average score of 2.2 indicates an average improvement of 1.4 points on the five-point scale. The largest improvement was reported regarding the system of higher education (2.2) and above-average improvement regarding cultural and social issues, while knowledge on political issues and the economic system of the host country increased to a lesser extent.

The improvement in knowledge of the host country was strongly related to the duration of the study period abroad. It increased from 0.9 on the five-point scale if the study period was three months, to 1.4 for a half year period and to 1.6 if the study period was 9 months or longer. Those going abroad for a long period rated their knowledge prior to the study period abroad relatively low. Thus, the level of knowledge reached upon return did not differ substantially according to the duration of the study period abroad: it was rated upon return 2.4 on average by those students who had been abroad only three months as compared to 2.1 by those who were abroad for 12 months. Again, this result may reflect the application of stricter standards by those studying abroad for longer periods.

Table 8.3
Self-rating of Knowledge About Host Country - Prior to and After Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (mean*)

		Host country										Total
		B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Political system and institutions	prior	4.3	3.6	4.3	3.8	3.5	3.3	4.2	4.2	3.7	4.5	3.4	3.7
	after	2.6	2.2	2.6	2.0	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.6	2.5	2.2	2.3
Dominant political issues	prior	4.5	3.7	4.6	4.1	3.5	3.7	4.1	4.4	3.8	4.8	3.6	3.8
	after	2.8	2.2	3.1	2.0	2.3	1.7	2.4	2.4	3.1	2.4	2.2	2.3
Foreign policy in general	prior	4.2	3.8	4.6	3.8	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.8	3.8	4.1	3.3	3.6
	after	3.0	2.6	3.0	2.5	2.7	2.0	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.5
Policy towards your own country	prior	4.2	3.5	4.4	3.7	3.2	3.5	4.0	3.8	3.3	4.0	3.3	3.5
	after	3.1	2.7	2.9	2.4	2.6	2.0	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.0	2.5	2.6
System of higher education	prior	4.5	3.5	4.3	4.4	3.8	3.6	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.3	3.9	4.0
	after	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.2	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.6	1.9	1.8
Cultural life (art, music, theatre, etc.)	prior	4.1	3.2	4.3	3.7	3.3	2.7	3.4	4.1	3.6	4.3	3.4	3.5
	after	2.0	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.2	2.0	1.9	2.6	1.8	2.1	2.0
Dominant social issues	prior	4.5	3.6	4.3	3.8	3.6	3.2	3.9	3.8	3.9	4.3	3.6	3.8
	after	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.0	2.0	1.2	2.1	1.9	2.6	2.0	2.2	2.2
Economic system	prior	4.2	3.4	4.1	3.8	3.5	3.0	3.9	4.0	3.8	4.1	3.4	3.6
	after	2.8	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.5	1.8	2.2	2.2	2.7	2.4	2.4	2.4
The country's geography	prior	3.8	3.2	3.3	3.5	2.7	2.3	3.1	3.6	2.9	4.0	3.3	3.2
	after	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.9	2.0	1.8

(to be cont.)

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(Table 8.3 cont.)

		Host country										Total
		B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Social structure (family, class system)	prior	4.0	3.2	4.4	3.7	3.4	2.5	3.6	3.8	3.0	3.8	3.5	3.5
	after	2.3	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.1	1.2	1.6	1.7	2.2	1.8	2.1	2.0
Customs, traditions, religion	prior	4.1	3.2	4.4	3.3	3.2	2.3	3.5	3.5	3.1	4.0	3.4	3.4
	after	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.7	1.9	1.2	1.7	1.6	2.0	1.5	2.1	1.9
Treatment of recently arrived immigrants	prior	4.5	3.7	4.3	4.3	3.9	3.0	4.4	4.4	3.7	4.5	4.0	4.1
	after	2.4	2.5	2.9	2.8	2.2	1.3	2.4	3.0	2.8	2.5	2.7	2.5
Sports, leisure/ recreational activities	prior	4.2	3.4	4.4	3.8	3.3	2.7	3.7	3.6	3.0	4.0	3.5	3.6
	after	2.3	2.1	2.4	2.1	2.3	1.3	1.9	1.5	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.1

Question 8.3: How would you rate your level of knowledge with regard to the following aspects of the host country, immediately before you went abroad and now?
* On a scale from 1 = "extensive knowledge" to 5 = "very minimal knowledge"

Regarding the host countries, above-average improvement of knowledge was reported from students going to small EC countries. If we aggregate the responses to the various aspects, we note the greatest improvement in knowledge by students who were in Portugal, Denmark, and Ireland. After the study period abroad, knowledge on the different host countries continued to vary substantially from country to country, as Table 8.3 indicates. Those who spent a study period in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark felt least knowledgeable about the host country.

8.3 Opinions of Culture and Society

With respect to ten aspects, such as foreign policy, cultural life, and the higher education system, ECTS students were asked to rate their opinions of the host country and of the home country both immediately before and after the study period abroad. Again a five-point scale was used from 1 = "highly positive" to 5 = "highly negative".

ECTS students' opinions of both the host and the home country were 2.9 on average both before and after the study abroad period. This shows that opinions on the home and host country were balanced. It also shows that the study period abroad did not lead on average to substantial changes of opinion on the host or the home country. The opinions on both the home and host countries expressed by ECTS students in 1989/90 were on average very similar to those expressed by ICP students in the preceding year.

This does not mean, however, that opinions remained identical since 62 percent of the scores on the host country changed over time and as many as 33 percent of the ratings on the home country also changed. In view of the fact that most students had spent almost all their life in the country of the home institution of higher education, this proportion might be considered to be remarkably high. Both regarding host and home country, most changes of attitudes took place regarding the system of higher education.

Opinions on the respective host countries varied substantially according to the individual aspects, as Table 8.4 show. On average, opinions on culture, customs and traditions as well as on the urban life of the host country became more favourable, while opinions on host country's policies were slightly more negative upon return. Altogether, changes of attitudes in the positive direction took place most often by students who spent their study period abroad in the Netherlands, while changes in the negative direction were most frequent among students who went to Greece or Italy. In looking at individual countries and aspects, we note for example that among the four major host countries for ECTS students, German higher education was, on average, more positively

Table 8.4
Opinions About Host Country - Prior to and After Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (mean*)

		Host country											Total
		B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Higher education	prior	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.8	2.5	1.4	2.5	3.0	2.4	3.5	2.4	2.5
	after	2.5	2.1	2.7	3.1	2.7	2.5	3.1	2.2	1.9	2.6	2.6	2.6
Foreign policy	prior	3.2	2.9	.	3.1	2.9	2.6	3.0	2.6	2.4	3.2	3.2	3.0
	after	3.0	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.3	2.7	2.7	3.0	3.3	3.1
Cultural life	prior	3.0	2.5	1.7	2.3	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.3	3.0	3.1	2.7	2.5
	after	2.2	2.1	2.1	1.6	2.2	2.5	2.3	1.9	2.7	2.9	2.4	2.2
Media	prior	3.1	2.6	2.0	3.0	2.7	2.2	2.6	2.5	3.3	3.8	2.8	2.8
	after	3.1	2.5	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.6	3.2	3.5	2.8	2.8
Customs and traditions	prior	3.1	2.7	2.0	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.4	3.0	3.0	2.6	2.9	2.7
	after	2.6	2.4	2.9	2.1	2.4	2.7	2.2	1.9	2.4	2.1	2.6	2.4
Treatm. of recently arrived immigrants	prior	3.2	3.3	1.0	3.4	3.3	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.4	3.0	3.3	3.2
	after	3.1	3.4	2.8	3.1	3.6	3.8	3.5	2.7	2.5	3.1	3.5	3.4
Social structure	prior	2.8	2.8	1.0	2.8	2.9	2.6	3.0	2.7	3.0	3.0	3.3	3.0
	after	3.0	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.8	3.1	3.0	2.4	3.1	3.3	3.0
Urban life	prior	2.9	2.7	2.0	2.9	2.6	2.0	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.2	3.1	2.9
	after	2.3	2.5	1.9	2.4	2.4	2.2	3.1	2.7	2.2	2.9	2.8	2.6
Governm. domestic policies	prior	3.1	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.4	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.5	3.5	3.1
	after	3.1	2.9	2.7	3.0	3.0	3.2	4.0	3.3	2.8	3.7	3.7	3.3
Environmental policies	prior	2.9	2.2	2.7	3.7	3.5	2.4	3.8	2.5	2.6	3.8	3.5	3.2
	after	3.0	1.9	2.4	3.9	3.5	2.3	3.9	3.5	1.9	4.8	3.5	3.3

Question 8.4: What was your opinion about each of the following aspects of the host country and the home country immediately before you went abroad? And what is your opinion now?
* On a scale from 1 = "highly positive opinion" to 5 = "highly negative opinion"

Table 8.5
Opinions About Home Country - Prior to and After Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (mean*)

		Country of home institution											Total
		B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Higher education	prior	2.4	2.5	2.3	3.3	2.4	3.3	2.8	1.6	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.6
	after	2.3	2.3	2.0	3.0	2.4	3.2	2.4	1.7	2.3	2.7	2.3	2.5
Foreign policy	prior	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.2	2.7	3.1	3.3	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.9	2.9
	after	3.2	3.0	2.9	3.2	2.7	3.2	3.0	2.3	2.6	2.8	3.2	3.0
Cultural life	prior	3.0	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.5	2.8	2.9	2.0	2.9	2.9	2.3	2.6
	after	3.0	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.5	1.8	2.6	2.9	2.4	2.5
Media	prior	2.7	3.0	3.2	3.0	2.7	3.1	2.9	2.1	2.7	2.9	2.5	2.8
	after	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.7
Customs and traditions	prior	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.2	2.7	2.2	2.7	2.0	2.7	2.3	2.7	2.6
	after	2.5	3.1	2.6	2.0	2.7	2.1	2.5	1.8	2.4	1.9	2.8	2.5
Treatm. of recently arrived immigrants	prior	3.3	3.8	2.9	3.0	3.5	2.9	3.6	3.0	2.9	2.4	3.4	3.3
	after	3.1	3.7	3.2	3.1	3.5	2.8	3.4	2.6	3.0	2.5	3.2	3.3
Social structure	prior	2.7	2.8	2.3	2.8	2.8	2.4	2.7	2.3	2.6	2.6	3.2	2.8
	after	2.7	2.6	2.3	2.7	2.7	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.1	3.2	2.6
Urban life	prior	3.1	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.9	3.1	3.4	2.8	2.7	2.8	3.1	2.9
	after	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.9	3.4	3.6	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.9	2.8
Governmental domestic policies	prior	3.3	3.1	3.3	3.6	3.2	3.6	4.3	3.4	2.6	3.1	3.4	3.4
	after	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.7	4.2	3.3	2.5	3.3	3.5	3.4
Environmental policies	prior	3.7	3.2	2.9	4.0	3.3	3.9	4.1	3.3	2.7	3.4	3.6	3.5
	after	4.0	2.6	2.8	4.1	3.6	4.2	4.1	3.0	2.3	3.5	3.6	3.5

Question 8.4: What was your opinion about each of the following aspects of the host country and the home country immediately before you went abroad? And what is your opinion now?
* On a scale from 1 = "highly positive opinion" to 5 = "highly negative opinion"

assessed than British, French, and finally Spanish higher education. The differences in this respect were larger after the study period abroad than prior to it. Spanish cultural life was most highly appreciated after the study period abroad, while the rating prior to the study period abroad was similar to those for France and Germany.

Looking at the information by country of the home institution of higher education, we note that Irish and Dutch students expressed the most positive opinion about their home country both before and after the study period abroad. On the other hand, Italian students viewed their home country least favourably both before and after the study period, as Table 8.5 show.

Altogether we might state that the study period in another EC country was instrumental in causing students to re-assess both the host and the home country and to changing opinions of many aspects of the host country and, to a lesser extent, the home country as well. Overall, however, this did not lead to more positive or more negative attitudes towards the host country or the home country. The value of the study period abroad regarding opinions seems to lie not in increasing sympathy towards other countries or towards the home country in general, but rather to provide opportunities for a broad range of experiences which might lead to changes of opinions on particular aspects of home and host country.

8.4 Personal Value of Study Abroad

Students were asked to state the extent to which they considered it worthwhile to study abroad for reasons such as study progress, career, foreign language proficiency, understanding the host country, travelling, or making a break from usual surroundings. They were asked to rate each of ten aspects in the question on a scale from 1 = "extremely worthwhile" to 5 = "not at all worthwhile".

Altogether, students considered the study period abroad supported by the ERASMUS scheme as worthwhile. The average rating for all ten aspects was 1.9., i.e. higher than scale point 2 which could be called "worthwhile". The personal value of the study abroad was assessed by ECTS students in 1989/90 almost identically to ICP students in 1988/89.

As Table 8.6 shows, acquaintance with people in the host country, foreign language proficiency (1.4 each), and knowledge and understanding of the host country (1.6) were most highly valued, while academic issues - although appreciated as well - were less positively viewed: exposure to other teaching methods was assessed as a more worthwhile academic outcome (1.8) than exposure to subject areas not offered at the home institution (2.4) and the

impact on study progress after return (2.8 as compared to 2.5 in case of the ICP students one year before).

Table 8.6
Personal Value of Study Abroad, by Host Country (mean*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Other teaching methods than at home	1.6	1.8	1.3	2.3	1.8	1.2	2.1	1.8	1.4	2.6	1.8	1.8
Exposure to subj. not offered at home university	2.1	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.3	2.5	2.2	1.8	2.8	3.6	2.4	2.4
Study progress after return	2.4	2.5	2.5	3.1	2.9	1.5	3.1	2.8	1.9	3.0	2.8	2.8
Opportunity to travel	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.6	2.0	1.3	1.5	1.6	2.0	1.5	1.8	1.8
Career prospects	2.0	1.6	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.3	1.9	1.6	1.8	3.4	1.8	1.9
Acquaintance with people in another country	1.5	1.6	1.0	1.2	1.6	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.4
Foreign language proficiency	1.9	1.5	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.7	1.1	1.3	2.3	1.1	1.3	1.4
New perspectives on home country	1.8	2.0	3.3	2.0	2.0	3.5	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.2
Knowledge and understanding of the host country	1.4	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.5	1.5	2.1	1.1	1.7	1.6
Break from usual surroundings	2.1	2.0	1.3	1.6	1.9	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.8	1.8
(n)	(21)	(35)	(7)	(39)	(64)	(6)	(21)	(17)	(9)	(8)	(104)	(331)

Question 8.8: To what extent do you consider it was worthwhile for you to study abroad with regard to the following aspects?
* On a scale from 1 = "extremely worthwhile" to 5 = "not at all worthwhile"

The overall assessment varied only slightly by host country. ECTS students who spent their study period abroad in Ireland rated the overall value of the period spent abroad the highest (1.8 on average for all ten items), followed closely by students who were in Denmark, Belgium, Greece, and Germany. Only those spending the study period in Portugal considered the value of this study period somewhat less favourably (2.2).

Table 8.7
Personal Value of Study Abroad, by Field of Study (mean*)

	Field of study					Total
	Business administration	History	Chemistry	Medicine	Mechanical engineering	
Other teaching methods than at home	1.7	1.7	2.0	1.7	2.1	1.8
Exposure to subj. not offered at home university	2.2	2.0	2.6	3.0	2.5	2.4
Study progress after return	2.7	2.4	3.0	2.5	3.2	2.8
Opportunity to travel	1.6	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.7
Career prospects	1.6	2.1	1.8	2.0	2.0	1.9
Acquaintance with people in another country	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.7	1.5	1.4
Foreign language proficiency	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.3	1.4
New perspectives on home country	1.9	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.3	2.2
Knowledge and understanding of the host country	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6
Break from usual surroundings	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8
(n)	(90)	(56)	(50)	(64)	(72)	(332)

Question 8.8: To what extent do you consider it was worthwhile for you to study abroad with regard to the following aspects?
* On a scale from 1 = "extremely worthwhile" to 5 = "not at all worthwhile"

Differences in the assessment of the value of the study period abroad were also relatively small, as far as fields of study were concerned. However, as Table 8.7 shows, students enrolled in history highly appreciated the exposure to subject areas not offered at the home institution, and also regarded the impact on their study progress after return more positively. Students in business administration found it particularly worthwhile for their career and for getting new perspectives on their home country. Students in medicine found the study period abroad less worthwhile with regard to exposure to other subjects. Finally, students in mechanical engineering found the period abroad less valuable for their study progress after return.

Asked to state their satisfaction with their study period abroad in general ("all things considered") on a scale from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "not satisfied at all", 58 percent of the ECTS students rated it very positively. The average score was 1.5 (identical to that of the ICP students of the preceding year). Only 2 percent (rating 4 or 5) were clearly dissatisfied with the study period abroad.

8.5 Desired Duration of the ERASMUS Supported Period

Bothdo the positive experiences during the study period abroad, and the limits of what they could experience and achieve during their stay, led many students to wish for a longer stay abroad than initially intended or supported. Around 19 percent of the ECTS students actually had a longer stay abroad (of about 5.7 months on average). In addition, 43 percent would have liked to extend it - on average for 7.3 months. The shorter the period of study abroad was, the more extension was desired on average. As already stated, ECTS students spent on average 8.2 months abroad as compared to 7.1 months for the ICP students of the preceding year. If we calculate the sum of realized and desired duration, it resulted in about one year on average for both groups.

9

Summary

Students participating in the European Community Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in its year of inauguration, i.e. 1989/90, were surveyed some months after completion of their study period abroad. The written questionnaire was an extended and adapted version of the one sent to almost half of the ICP students in 1988/89 (see Friedhelm Maiworm, Wolfgang Steube and Ulrich Teichler. Learning in Europe: The ERASMUS Experience. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1991) thus allowing a comparison of the findings. There were 553 ECTS students in 1989/90, of which the addresses of 510 were made available: 339 students responded to the questionnaire, a response rate of 66 percent.

ECTS students in 1989/90 were more "traditional" in their profile than the ICP comparison group students in 1988/89 (as compared to all ICP students). Only 8 percent of ECTS students were older than 25 years when they went abroad; 54 percent were male; 45 percent of ECTS students' fathers and 23 percent of their mothers (17 percent in case of ICP students) had been awarded a higher education degree. Only 13 percent of their study at home was funded by home country scholarships. A higher proportion of ECTS students lived in their own apartments. Finally, a larger proportion of ECTS students had already spent some period abroad since the age of 15 (8.3 months on average). The more traditional profile is to some extent due to the selection of fields of study included in the ECTS programme. This is especially the case regarding the participation of female students who were traditionally underrepresented in subjects like natural sciences and engineering.

ECTS students in 1989/90 spent on average 8.2 months studying abroad, with 63 percent spending more than six months abroad. Among those going abroad for more than six months, a higher proportion (than their ICP counterparts in 1988/89) were not well prepared as regards the host country

language and were less active in preparing themselves for the study period abroad.

In selecting the host institution of higher education, ECTS students in 1989/90 considered primarily the host country and their foreign language proficiency and, to a much lesser extent, the presumed reputation and quality of the host institution. Around 31 percent of ECTS students went to the United Kingdom, 19 percent to France, and 11 percent each to Germany and Spain.

Preparation at the home institution for the study period abroad was not very good in the first year of the ECTS pilot scheme. Comments about the ECTS information packages were not necessarily enthusiastic with less than half of the students rating them useful for the choice of the host university and for the choice of courses. A clearly smaller proportion of ECTS students in 1989/90 made use of preparatory provisions or prepared themselves for the study period than ICP students in 1988/89. Six percent took preparatory courses on host country culture and society while 35 percent stated that they prepared themselves regarding academic matters, 9 percent with the help of courses specially provided. A further 12 percent participated in mandatory courses provided for foreign language training, and 17 percent attended meetings for preparation regarding practical matters. The preparatory provisions were rated on average 3.0 on a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = "very poor". In general, assistance and advice provided by the home institution of higher education was more negatively assessed (3.2 on average) by the ECTS students than that provided by the host institution (2.6).

Indeed, ECTS students seemed, on average, to have been given more support by the host institution than ICP students of the preceding year. They rated assistance and advice more positively. They had slightly more support in the search for accommodation abroad, and they had to spend less time in temporary accommodation. They had contact with the host institution teaching staff not limited to the initial weeks abroad, but through the whole period of study at the host institution. They had slightly fewer problems regarding academic matters (18 percent stated serious problems in this respect). They were more likely to undertake activities for broadening their academic study and for getting acquainted with the host country culture and society. Most ECTS students felt well integrated into academic and social life abroad (average score of 2.3 on a scale from 1 = "to a great extent" to 5 = "not at all"). Among the factors that might have contributed to these relatively favourable results are the more substantial financial support to the departments participating in the ECTS scheme and the high ambitions of the scheme in general.

ECTS students spent, while abroad, a monthly average of 441 ECU for living expenses, 32 ECU for return travel to and from the host country, 23 ECU for continued expenses at home, and 30 ECU for tuition and fees. Total monthly expenses of 526 ECU were 184 ECU per month higher than expenses at home (342 ECU in total consisting of 311 ECU for living expenses and 29 ECU for tuition and fees).

The ECTS students surveyed were awarded an ERASMUS grant which covered 36.7 percent of the cost incurred during the study period abroad. On average, this supplementary grant of 184 ECU per month covered the additional costs but contributions by parents as well as by home country fellowships to the costs borne abroad were slightly lower in absolute terms than the costs at home. While some ECTS students seemed to have received an increase in grant that more than covered additional costs abroad, others received less, and altogether 15 percent (as compared to 21 percent of the ICP students of the preceding year) stated that they faced serious financial problems.

On average, ECTS students took 20.9 weekly hours of courses abroad, ranging from 11.1 hours in history to 29.4 hours in chemistry. At home, they had taken 1.8 hours more. The language of instruction was the host country language in 84 percent of the cases (in comparison to 76 percent in the cases of the ICP students in 1988/89).

Around 25 percent of the ECTS students had serious problems regarding the award of credits and credit transfer. They also stated more often problems due to differences of teaching and learning styles between the host and home institution. Altogether, they experienced more academic and fewer administrative problems than ICP students in the preceding year.

The formal mechanisms of the ECTS pilot scheme were not (yet) well established in the year of its inauguration. Only 38 percent of the participating students reported that they were awarded ECTS credits for achievements prior to the study period abroad. Only 31 percent reported that a written statement was provided about their achievements before they went abroad; however, many of these students simply did not know whether a written statement had been issued since it had or could have have been directly sent to the host institution. Upon completion of the study period abroad, 56 percent of the ECTS students received a certificate stating the number of credits awarded: 29 percent received another type of written statement, while 15 percent did not receive any statement at all.

Students were admitted to 98 percent of the courses they had chosen originally, but 55 percent of the students took courses at the host university they had not intended to take at the beginning of their stay abroad. Obviously, information provided during the initial weeks at the host institution had a

strong impact in terms of revising choices made prior to the sojourn. Most students stated positive reasons for changing courses, mainly in terms of interesting courses, alternatives to study programme at home, good fit with their area of specialisation, while some named problems such as the academic level of the courses and language problems. Some 60 percent of the ECTS students, however, reported that the courses they followed abroad were less demanding than similar courses taken at home (31 % of all courses followed fell into this category). The obviously incomplete introduction of the formal measures of the ECTS scheme did not turn out to be a substantial barrier to recognition for most students, though some problems were obvious. About three quarters of the ECTS students who responded to the questions as regarding implicit or explicit acceptance of prior achievements by the host institution said that 91 percent of these prior achievements were accepted. While abroad, students were granted on average 92 percent of the credits allocated to the courses they took. As many students took more courses than required, the awards correspond on average to 59 credits annually.

The average number of credits transferred (i.e. accepted by the institution ECTS students were enrolled in for the subsequent academic year) was 95 percent of those awarded during the study period abroad. The achievements during the study abroad period were rated to correspond on average to 86 percent of those expected during a corresponding period at home, and the prolongation due to studying abroad was expected to amount to 29 percent on average of the total period of study up to the award of a degree. These figures compare favourably to those reported on average by ICP students of the preceding year (All ICP students: 77%, 73% and 50% respectively; ICP comparison group: 81, 77 and 40 %). One has to bear in mind, however, that only 59 percent of the ECTS students gave information on the number of credits transferred and also only about half of the ECTS students reported the correspondence between their achievements abroad to those expected during a corresponding period at home. We assume that the figures would be less favourable if all ECTS students had provided the relevant information.

ECTS students rated their academic progress abroad more positively than academic progress during a corresponding period at home: 2.7 on average on a scale from 1 = "much better" to 5 = "much less". Their ratings, however, were less positive than those by the ICP - comparison group - students in 1988/89 (2.6). These findings of ECTS students being awarded a higher extent of recognition, though rating their achievements abroad less favourably than ICP students, invites various different interpretations.

Knowledge on the host country culture and society increased substantially during the study period abroad according to the ECTS students' rating. Opinions on various aspects of culture and society, both of the host and the home

country, did not change on average during the study period abroad, because the changes observed were spread equally positively and negatively. In all these respects, ratings by the ECTS students on average were almost identical to those by the ICP students of the preceding year.

The personal value of study abroad was viewed positively by most ECTS students. Acquaintance with the host country and language proficiency were most highly valued, while academic issues were less positively viewed. The overall satisfaction with the study period was very positive in the case of 58 percent of the ECTS students. The average score of 1.5 on a scale from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "very dissatisfied" was identical to that rated by ICP students of the preceding year.

As regards fields of study, we note that students in business administration most often took courses for academic preparation purposes. They reported most often serious problems regarding credit systems and credit transfer. Prolongation expected due to study abroad for students of business administration was lowest among the five fields. Finally, students enrolled in business administration were more convinced than students from other fields that study abroad would be worthwhile for their career.

History students did not assess their means of preparation very favourably. They faced more problems in taking courses in a foreign language and prior study was accepted by the host institution to lesser extent than in other fields. History students, together with students enrolled in medicine, expected most prolongation of study due to the study abroad period. Finally, history students seemed to appreciate more than average the value of being exposed to subject matter not offered at home.

Chemistry students, too, did not assess their preparation very favourably. They took fewer courses abroad for the purpose for broadening their academic and cultural experiences and stated least problems regarding guidance. All the credits awarded to them while abroad were transferred to the institution they were enrolled in subsequently. They expected more prolongation of study due to study abroad than average.

Medical students took fewer courses abroad involving content not available at home than students in other fields. They took fewer courses abroad which were less demanding than those at home. Medical students, together with those enrolled in history, expected more prolongation of study due to the study abroad period than students enrolled in other fields.

Students enrolled in mechanical engineering hardly differed from the average of all ECTS students regarding any fact and opinion they stated. The prolongation expected due to the study period abroad was below average. However, they considered the period of study abroad less valuable for their subsequent study progress.

Regarding home country preparation, the level of provision was highest in Denmark, the Netherlands and United Kingdom. Fewer provisions in this respect were made for Belgium and Greece students. Almost all Danish and more than half of Portuguese and Spanish students reported that their home institutions had calculated previous achievements in terms of ECTS credits as compared to only one out of six German students. Expected prolongation of study was highest for German, Greek and Dutch students. Spanish, Greek, and Italian students appreciated academic progress report most highly. As already noted in regard to the responses by the ICP students, students from southern European countries seem to consider quality of higher education abroad somewhat higher than in their home country.

As regards host country, we note that a substantial proportion of courses which the ECTS students took in Denmark, Greece and the Netherlands were not taught in the host country language. Students going to Denmark, Greece and the United Kingdom appreciated frequent contact with host academic staff while students spending the period abroad in Denmark and Germany rated the quality of accommodation most positively. Fewest administrative problems were viewed by students going to Denmark and Ireland. Academic and social integration was felt most successful by students spending a study period in Spain, Ireland and Portugal. Living expenses were highest for students going to Denmark, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Spain. Students going to Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands were less likely to follow less demanding courses than students going to other Member States. Students' knowledge on the host country was found to be lower for the smaller EC countries. Among the major host countries, higher education in Germany and cultural life in Spain was most positively assessed.

It remains to be seen whether gaps regarding implementation of the formal mechanisms of the ECTS scheme, gaps regarding preparatory provisions as well as the frequent choice of less demanding courses abroad than those at home are temporary phenomena in the year of inauguration or will persist. Although ECTS students seemed to appreciate provisions for study, and the assistance provided abroad as well as their living conditions abroad (relatively high financial support to the participating departments might have contributed to favourable study conditions abroad), a considerable proportion of them reported academic problems. Award of recognition had clearly a higher profile in the ECTS pilot scheme than on average within the framework of ICPs but when viewed in relation to the ambitious goals of the ECTS pilot scheme, further improvements are certainly desirable.

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This study provides an overview on the experiences of the first generation of European students spending a period of study in another Member State of the European Community in the framework of the European Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS) of the ERASMUS Programme. About 350 students responded to a written questionnaire. The findings suggest that credits awarded were remarkably high in spite of obvious problems regarding the faithful pursuit of the ECTS scheme in its initial year 1989/90.

Die Studie bietet eine Übersicht über die Erfahrungen der ersten Generation europäischer Studierender, die eine Studienphase an einer Hochschule eines anderen Landes der Europäischen Gemeinschaft im Rahmen des Pilotprogramms eines europäischen Systems zur Anrechnung von Studienleistungen (ECTS) des ERASMUS Programms verbrachten. Etwa 350 Studierende beantworteten einen schriftlichen Fragebogen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, daß für die Studienleistungen im Ausland in beachtlich hohem Maße Credits vergeben wurden, obwohl sich im Hinblick auf die Einhaltung der Regeln von ECTS im Gründungsjahr 1989/90 offensichtlich Probleme ergaben.

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